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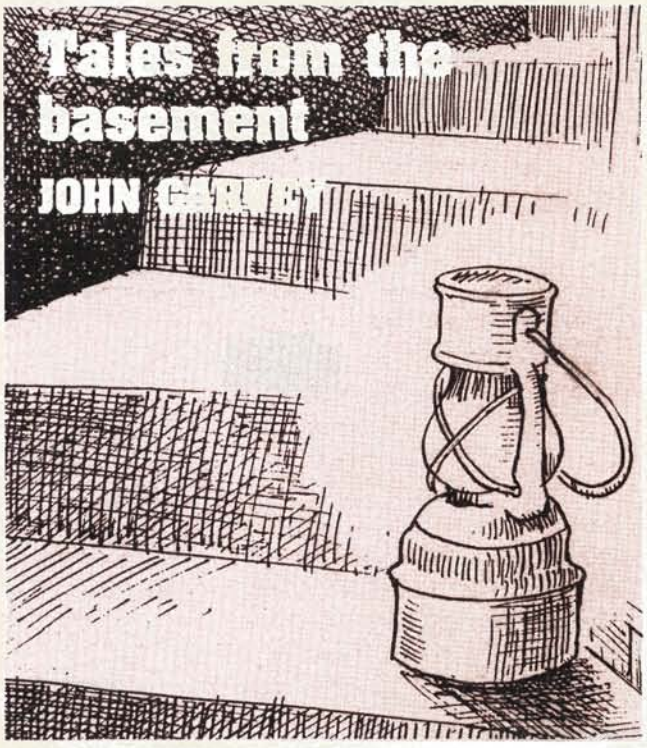
COMMONWEAL

Daniel: Beloved by God and by Me

BRIDGET BALTHROP MORTON

"But mother, I'm not an egg anymore."



R CONTINUING SERIES ON CATHOLIC WRITERS
V. Long on BRIAN MOORE

rriers to the Sacraments
SEPH M. CHAMPLIN

REPORTS

HAEL W. FOLEY
Mexico

AL LEVINE
on Black Catholics in Washington

PATRICK G. COY
on Libya

BOOKS

David Toolan on A.G. MOJTABAI

John A. Coleman on ANDREW M. GREELEY

Sidney Callahan on SEBASTIAN MOORE

Robert M. Hayes on PETER H. ROSSI

Lawrence S. Cunningham RELIGIOUS BOOKNOTES

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CORRESPONDENCE

Our friend Anne

Warwick, N.Y.

To the Editors: Deeply shocked by Anne Robertson's death I have to express my feelings of personal loss. Whatever contact I had with *Commonweal* went through Anne, of whom Claude, my wife, and I were as fond as if she had been an intimate friend, even if she only brought friends to Pacem in Terris a few times. She must be very sorely missed on Dutch Street. She is also missed very much in our world.

FREDERICK FRANCK

No oath for Jesus

Cocoa, Fla.

To the Editors: After reading "Inflating the Oath" [September 8] by canonist Rev. James A. Coriden, I shook my head in disbelief. Then my mind wandered way back in time to a distant place.

I pictured Jesus standing before a lineup of twelve men. In his hands was a large book. The first man in line placed his left hand upon the book and raised his right hand. Looking very stern, unlike the caring, gentle one I had come to love, the Lord intoned, "Do you, Peter, solemnly swear...."

I shook my head again and muttered, "No. He wouldn't do anything like that."

DONALD WIETA

Gay rights guru

Minneapolis, Minn.

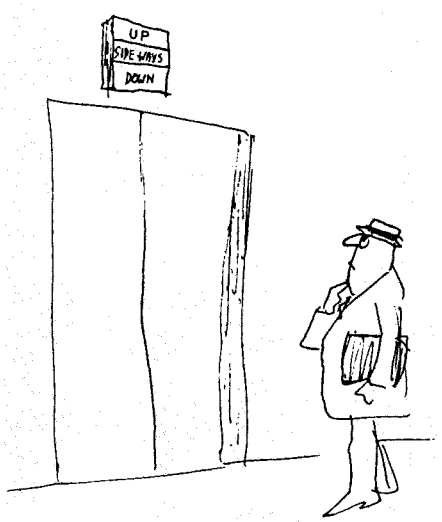
To the Editors: Antiquated canonical distinctions are repeated to denigrate and damage sensitive persons. Pockets of cruelty continue.

Glory to Gordon Zahn for a classic statement ["The Human Rights of Homosexuals," September 8] in defense of basic rights for homosexuals and a courageous protest against the efforts of the Catholic bishops of Massachusetts to prevent nondiscriminatory legislation.

Dr. Zahn has long been the guru of the Catholic peace movement and related programs for justice. He now becomes an articulate and polite champion for gay persons who, in Massachusetts, may be theologically cornered and piously enslaved by a handful of clerics.

After forty years of prophetic messages on social issues, Dr. Zahn is wiser and gutsier than ever.

REV. HARVEY F. EGAN



Parishes for Poland

Silver Spring, Md.

To the Editors: Your editorial [September 22] on the Polish situation struck a resonant cord: "Nor...have the Poles been able to channel the(ir) remarkable energies...into economic efforts that will feed and sustain a hungry and demoralized population."

Since then a number of countries have promised stepped-up supplies of food (most probably from farm surpluses); this may relieve starvation but, with the difficulties the Poles have had with their bureaucracy heretofore, there is no assurance the new government can efficiently distribute the food or that it will contain the kind of food that will be varied and attractive enough to lift the spirits of a demoralized population to enable it to meet the sacrifices required to bring the other elements of the economy into needed modernization.

Why can't our parishes in the U.S. and other Western countries adopt Polish parishes and, through the church's good offices, engage in a massive and sustained campaign to collect food and clothing for, say, two to five years?

This aid could be sent for distribution to Polish parishes to vary the people's diets, to cut down on food lines, to enable their farmers to sell food abroad to earn hard currency, and, above all, to demonstrate our solidarity.

As our pope visited Poland in the dark days of this decade to raise their spirits, let us open our hearts and our cupboards on a sustained basis to help the Poles to "do it."

CHARLES N. DAVIS

Poles & Jews together

Baltimore, Md.

To the Editors: Before the dispute ["A Sign of Contradiction," and "Poland's Precipice," September 22] goes any further, the leaders of the Jewish and Catholic communities should sit down and discuss the argument over the Carmelite convent in Poland and settle the issue amicably.

No one gains from the dispute. Behind

(Continued on page 574)

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COMMONWEAL

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Ties that blind

For solid historical reasons that reflect credit on both Israel and the United States, the relationship between the two nations has always been unusual. In recent years, however, it has become not just special but peculiar—and, in our opinion, unhealthy. Forget Lebanon; ignore the handling of the *intifada*; consider only these two very recent developments:

● Saudi Arabia wants to buy a billion dollars' worth of battlefield tanks from General Dynamics and has asked the U.S. to give the necessary approval. The executive branch favors the deal, but, under the law, must formally notify Congress, which can then choose to vote it down—and is very likely to do so if the government of Israel voices disapproval. So the secretaries of state and defense, before consulting Congress, have asked their opposite numbers in the Israeli cabinet not to lobby against the sale; or, at least, not to lobby too hard. By way of incentives they have offered changes in U.S. policies and procedures that would confer significant financial and military benefits on Israel.

One is reminded of recent happenings in the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Arguably, however, the secretaries may have chosen the politically prudent course. Judging by the record, Congress may very well give greater weight to *any* Israeli government's preferences than to the judgment of *any* U.S. administration about the impact of *any* Middle East policy. This is emphatically not to say that the proposed sale of weapons is obviously a good idea, or that the Congress should ignore its possible effects on Israel's security. What's at issue is the likelihood, underlined by the actions of Messrs. Baker and Cheney, that the plan will never be discussed on its merits as they relate to American values, U.S. interests, and the balance of forces in the Middle East (including not just the Israelis vis-à-vis the Arabs but also the Saudis vis-à-vis Iran and Iraq). For too many members of both Houses, these things matter less than their perceived need to qualify, come election time, for endorsement as unfailing friends of Israel. Just as Israel's enormous dependence on U.S. grants and credits distorts its economy, so also our own leaders' all-too-eager responsiveness to Israeli pressures distorts our politics.

● The distortion becomes even clearer in relation to another current issue. For reasons both noble and pragmatic, Israel wants to bring to its shores as many thousands of the new Soviet Jewish emigrants as possible. One problem is that there isn't enough housing, and Israel lacks resources to meet the need. What to do? Predictably, Israel has turned to the U.S.; it asks our government to provide some $400 million in loan guarantees in order to lessen financing costs—even though present law puts a $125 million annual cap on *all* loan guarantees abroad, and an annual limit of $25 million in allotments to any one country.

Once upon a time, nevertheless, the Israeli proposal would have been seen in this

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country, and by this journal, as not only appropriate but welcome. Now, however, as the Israelis know or ought to know, the context has changed. Budget considerations are significant but secondary. We do have our own problems of homelessness, not to speak of drug addiction, decaying infrastructure, unemployment, poor education, the historic—and expensive—opportunities opening in Eastern Europe, the disaster waiting to develop out of third-world debt, the enormous "off-budget" commitments made to rescue the savings and loan industry, and so on down a long list.

Yet money is nowhere near the heart of the issue. Given Israel's ethos and record, discounting any near-term possibility of its economic collapse, loan guarantees are a low-cost way of giving help. But help toward what? Israeli officials candidly acknowledge what current Israeli policy makes obvious: Some or most of the new housing units would be built in the occupied territories.

Israel has not formally annexed the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, but its leaders affirm a right to do so, on grounds of security or religion or both, and its day-to-day actions from 1967 onward have constituted a *de facto*, step-by-step absorption of the land, accompanied by subjection of its inhabitants and by a refusal to make any accommodation with them except on Israel's own terms.

Here too the context has changed. International law no longer recognizes any right of conquest followed by colonization. Very few people anywhere will consent to the notion that Judea and Samaria belong to Israel by divine appointment. Most of the world recognizes that emigrating Soviet Jews deserve homes and security—but that the Palestinians deserve nothing less; no one today would call the territories "a land without people for a people without land."

Most to the point, however, is that declared U.S. policy has always been that continuing the occupation makes Israel not more secure but less so, and that the settlements constitute an obstacle to peace. In these circumstances, Israel's request is best described as brazen. It becomes shamelessly so in view of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's failure thus far to follow up on his own announcement of last April, declaring his government's readiness for negotiations with elected Palestinian representatives. At the time that statement gave hope; now it is a mere puzzlement. When Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak put forward for discussion a carefully neutral set of proposals on how to flesh out the Israeli proposal, Shamir dismissed it scornfully as a formula for "surrender"—and a seriously divided cabinet now has voted it down.

It is somewhat reassuring that the Bush administration has responded coolly to the Israeli request for loan guarantees, and has uttered mildly encouraging words about the Mubarak initiative. But something more is needed if Israel is to be drawn from its self-destructive course. It's not irrelevant that its policies are also ruinously expensive, or that we pay much of the bill. Granted, the U.S. should say or do nothing that might strengthen the hand of the rejectionist Arab states and Palestinian factions. It should and can, however, do more than it has to support the pragmatists on all sides and to confront the ideologues with reality. It is not in the interests of the Israeli people that their leaders continue to draw upon what is not and ought not be a bottomless fund of American patience. Prime Minister Shamir needs to acquire a sense of limits. It's not likely that quiet, tactful diplomacy will get the job done.

TURNING OFF THE GAS

Last January, reacting to the use of chemical warfare agents in the Iran-Iraq war, 149 nations met in Paris to call for a ban on the production and use of chemical weapons. At the time, various delegates remarked that George Bush's commitment would be decisive in eventually producing a strong treaty.

From 1969-87, the U.S. unilaterally observed a moratorium on chemical weapons production. Even so, we have some 30,000 tons stockpiled. That is enough to kill everyone in the world 5,000 times over, according to the American Chemical Society. The Soviet Union may have ten times that amount.

Last month at the UN, George Bush made an appeal for the world community to complete the work it had begun in 1969 at the ongoing Conference on Disarmament in Geneva by agreeing to a global, comprehensive, and verifiable ban on chemical weapons. With such a ban the U.S. would immediately work to eliminate 80 percent of its present stockpile if the Soviet Union would agree to parity; to eliminate 98 percent within eight years if appropriate verification procedures could be developed and equal reductions could be achieved; and to eliminate all American chemical "reserves" within a decade if a treaty banning such weapons all over the world is signed.

By congressional mandate, the U.S. was already scheduled to destroy 90 percent of its old, deteriorating unitary chemical weapons by 1997. But in 1987, thanks to a tie-breaking vote cast in the Senate by then Vice-President Bush, the U.S. began producing a new line of leaner, meaner, but safer-to-maintain binary chemical weapons. The U.S. is the only country to have them. As president, Mr. Bush has already budgeted $276.5 million for more such weapons. Thus, despite his words to the UN, this is a Bush who is inclined to hedge. No wonder the Pentagon heard his call at the UN with equanimity: "We do not need to cut any of our plans to field binary chemical weapons as a result of this initiative," a spokesman said.

Still, Mr. Bush's hedging is not an entirely misguided policy. For good reasons, chemical weapons have been called the "poor man's nuclear bomb." As many as twenty countries may possess the capacity to produce and use them. The technology is readily available from the civilian chemical industry, and the ability to project such weapons by the use of ICBMs is fast becoming available to a variety of countries. In the absence of an international ban, the stockpiling of some chemical weapons may serve as a deterrent.

The only reasonable insurance against the use of chemical weapons is twofold: a universal treaty banning their development, production, acquisition, possession, transfer, and use;

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and strict verification measures, including "intrusive, on-site inspection" within twenty-four hours of notification. (Both the U.S. and the USSR have called for such verification procedures and have opened some of their facilities to mutual inspection, although such verification becomes more difficult with binary weapons.) As for banning and controlling components, since 1985 nineteen chemical-producing countries (called the "Australia group") have agreed to monitor and strictly control nine chemicals that can be used for weaponry application. But this is a tricky business, as West Germany's reluctant admission earlier this year shows. Because of lax export laws, Libya had obtained materials from a West German company for a chemical plant at Rabta.

Such verification and control procedures will never be foolproof in themselves. But to come close to inspiring confidence, they must be grounded in a strong, coherent, and unified international moral consensus that proscribes any recourse to the development and possession of such weapons; and they must embody stringent international sanctions against any and all who do. As long as the superpowers insist on enhancing their stockpiles—as the U.S. is now doing with its binary production—the rest of the world will hardly be convinced that they should give up their quest for such weapons; and the risks of chemical terrorism will thereby increase. To assure the world community of his seriousness, President Bush should not only call for the abolition of all chemical weapons; he should immediately cease the production of further binary weapons.

ET CETERA

ODOR OF SANCTITY A sister publication which will here be nameless offers reassurance about the shortage of priests: "Catholic parishioners continue to esteem and to require the priest's presence as a radical expression of their own rottedness in God."

A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT More than six hundred delegates from Europe's Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, and Catholic churches gathered for a week in Basel, Switzerland last May —a historic meeting of Christians without precedence since the Reformation. They drew up a lengthy statement on the churches' response to war, poverty, and the environment.

"As European Christians," they wrote, "we have a substantial responsibility for the present crisis." In particular, they called for an end to the illusion that nature can be exploited endlessly and noted that peaceful relations with creation presuppose renouncing those structures in the economy and society which threaten life. "We should follow the recommendations of the Buntland report—which holds that it is possible to reduce the consumption of energy by the industrial nations by as much as 50 percent." And to make sure the shoe fit, they added: "That means for us a simple life-style, radically transformed." A reformation, indeed!

CURRAN'S CASE CONTINUED Our last articles about the Rev. Charles Curran—the moral theologian tenured at The Catholic University (CU), Washington, D.C., who was prohibited from teaching theology as "a Catholic theologian"—appeared in the March 24 issue. We reported Judge Frederick Weisberg's Superior Court decision in favor of the university. Weisberg found that Curran's academic freedom had not been violated by the university's withdrawal of Curran's canonical mission.

An investigative committee of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has determined the opposite: that the CU administration and board of trustees "failed to protect academic freedom and the university's autonomy." "By not permitting Professor Curran to teach Catholic theology in a nonecclesiastical department of the university [a proposal made by a committee of CU's own Academic Senate], the administration and the board of trustees for all practical purposes deprived him of his tenure without due process and without adequate cause."

The committee's lengthy report and the university's objections to it are published in the September-October *Academe*, the journal of the AAUP.

What's next? The committee will submit a report to the general AAUP meeting in June. Depending upon what happens between now and then regarding the Curran case, they may recommend further monitoring of CU, possibly even censure. While censure carries no official penalty, the list of censured institutions is widely published and can hinder a university's ability to hire promising faculty. Also, CU will soon be reviewed by the Middle States Accrediting Association, and the Curran decision, plus any further statement CU's board of trustees makes on academic freedom, may burden the accreditation process.

REPORT FROM MEXICO

CHURCH BEHIND THE SCENES

RENEGOTIATING HISTORY

The delicate relations between the Mexican Catholic church and the government are once again on the agenda, after nearly sixty years of uneasy truce and a decade of bickering and catcalling. The announcement that Pope John Paul II plans a second trip to Mexico some time in 1990, together with the papal nuncio's unguarded remark that church-state relations were under discussion at the highest levels of the government, provoked a storm of editorializing in Mexico City this summer, suggesting that the anticlerical tradition enshrined in Mexico's Constitution is still alive and well in intellectual and political circles, despite recent signs of a thaw.

The Constitution of 1917 renewed and codified the liberal

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nineteenth-century Reform Laws most closely associated with the name of national hero Benito Juarez. According to key provisions of the Constitution, no ecclesiastical body may own real estate, run schools, or enjoy juridical recognition (Article 130). The latter provision also prohibits churches and their leaders from participating in any way in politics; the law expressly forbids clerics the right to vote.

These provisions, and the anticlerical measures taken to implement them, provoked furious reactions from Mexican Catholics, culminating in the virtual civil war of 1926-29 known as the Cristero Rebellion. A 1929 accord signed by the archbishop of Mexico City and then-President Jose Portes Gil institutionalized a truce between church and state which left the offending principles on the books but allowed the church considerable room to maneuver around them.

Today, though the Mexican government formally owns virtually all church buildings, the Catholic church (and to a lesser extent various Protestant churches) has a more or less free hand in administering them. The Catholic church runs some thirty-six hundred schools, 7.5 percent of the total, including a number of universities, under the watchful eye of the Ministry of Public Education. And church people have become increasingly outspoken in politics.

The new outspokenness certainly accounts for some of the heat in recent reactions to the rumor of constitutional change. Though opposition politicians on the left began increasingly to find themselves allied with lower-level church people, and even a few bishops, in the 1970s and 1980s, the hierarchy's ties to the right-wing National Action Party, or PAN, aroused the ire of both the left opposition and the left wing of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, the PRI, as it is called in Mexico.

The PAN, which until last year's presidential election was the leading opposition movement, was founded in the 1940s by Catholic lay people, and it has maintained quiet ties with the church leadership since then. Thus, when the party claimed fraud in the 1986 gubernatorial elections in the northern state of Chihuahua, it was openly supported by the Catholic hierarchy, who solemnly called upon the government to respect the vote. Supporters of the government, especially on the left, cried foul, angered by the partisan character of the church's pronouncements and by the close links among conservative business interests, PAN leadership, and the hierarchy.

The presidential elections of 1988 seemed to have changed all that. With a viable opposition candidate on the left in the person of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, as well as on the right, the church's efforts to encourage people to vote and the government to respect the vote were perceived less as unwanted interference than as a contribution to the democratization of the political process.

But the notion that constitutional provisions, won after a long struggle with the most conservative forces in Mexican politics, should be altered has raised old fears of clerical dominance. These fears may not be particularly realistic. On the one hand, church leaders once again have displayed the old partisanship in recent elections disputes, carefully refraining from commenting on the left's claims to victory in the contested states of Michoacan and Oaxaca, while praising the government for acknowledging defeat to the PAN in Baja California, where that party took the governorship in the first loss of major office for the PRI since its founding in the 1920s. On the other hand, the church's efforts to influence electoral outcomes in Michoacan by identifying Cardenas's Revolutionary Democratic Party with "communism" seem to have fallen on deaf ears, with Cardenas's people drawing even or better against their PRI rivals in this most Catholic of Mexico's states. The church, moreover, is internally split, with an intensely conservative hierarchy struggling to control independent-minded lower clergy and lay people associated with the sometimes radical "base community" movement. Parties of the left, including Cardenas's recently formed PRD, have been actively wooing these activists.

All of this does not mean, however, that the Catholic church in Mexico will not push for constitutional reform. Indeed, the right to do so was the one political privilege church leaders have always assumed to be part of the understanding arrived at in 1929. The bishops have pledged not to resort to public pressure. But behind the scenes the pressure seems to be intense, especially as the administration of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari struggles to develop new bases of support for a severely crippled PRI. The wave of criticisms that greeted rumors of change provoked immediate denials, first by PRI president Luis Donaldo Colosio, then by Interior Minister Fernando Gutierrez Barrios. Neither man, however, denied that negotiations are underway, and neither foreclosed the possibility of change further down the road.

To the government of Salinas, it appears, the continued vitality of the church in Mexico seems to demand the removal of unworkable and unrealistic laws. To those who still see the institutional church as a threat, however, its vitality is a clear sign that the Constitution should not be tampered with. But if even Cardenas's Revolutionary Democratic Party supports reforms, as some predict it will, the old anticlericalism may fast fade from sight. MICHAEL W. FOLEY

Michael W. Foley is an assistant professor of politics at The Catholic University of America.

REPORT FROM WASHINGTON

TROUBLES THEY'VE SEEN
AFRICAN-AMERICAN CATHOLICS

George Murry, a Jesuit priest who is president of Carroll High School in Washington, D.C., formerly ran a parish in California with two other priests—an Irish-American and a Mexican-American. They took funerals and baptisms in turn. When Murry walked into one funeral, all the relatives moved to the other side of the room and stared. Finally,

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the brother of the deceased walked up to Murry and said: "We were expecting a white priest." After a pause, he added: "But you'll do."

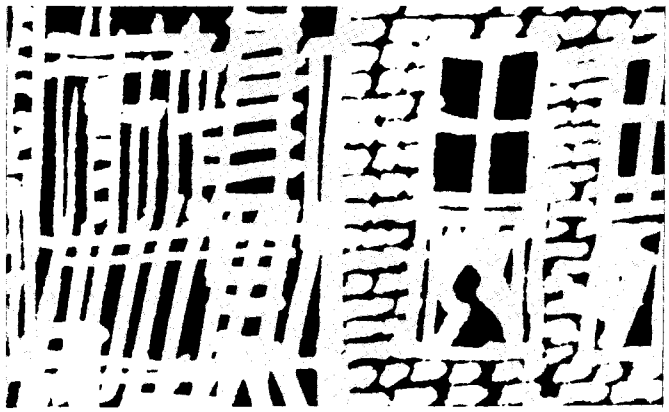
John Payne, an Augustinian friar soon to be ordained to the priesthood, recently preached the homily at St. Augustine's Church in Washington. "God understands," he said, "that within our hearts there is love and hate, good and evil, hate and innocence. He deeply loves his people so much that he wants us to be united." Payne knows how hard it can be to overcome these dualisms. He told me that he survived the seminary—where his attitude was considered too black and where he was told he was too backward to graduate—only because he refused to abandon his blackness.

And Jacqueline Wilson, director of the Office of Black Catholics for the Archdiocese of Washington, told me how she had been complimented effusively by a white colleague "for being able to read well out loud."

It is not uncommon for African-American Catholics to feel bitter reproaches within their own church. As the old African-American song goes: "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen." Yet the number of black Catholics in the U.S. has increased by a million in the past decade. As a Jewish-American Catholic, this fact intrigued me. Three months after my baptism I was on retreat at a monastery when I overheard the prior say after the evening meal: "It's those Jewish. You can't trust them. If you're looking for a bad experience, go to the Jewish. The Jewish are treacherous." This experience made me want to listen to black Catholics' stories.

Cynthia Norris, head of the Office of Black Catholics for the Archdiocese of Chicago, told me things are getting better for African-American Catholics because they are getting worse. "They're coming to a head," she said. "It always gets worse before it gets better." She feels the church is going through an identity crisis. She spoke of white priests in Chicago "who are blacker than the blackest person ever born," but also pointed to anti-black hostility everywhere. She excoriated the ignorance of some white Catholics: "They have a fear of approaching black persons and don't realize that they are a people with a culture, with a heritage. But nobody wants to see and admit to racism in the church." She recounted the judgment of a white South African priest who found Chicago more racist than his homeland. But she ended our conversation by telling me that black people love the church—for its "hospitality," its global unity, its ritual structure.

At a forum for African-American Catholics at St. Augustine's in Washington in August, an informal poll disclosed similar ambivalences. It concluded that the church is satisfactory and no changes need be made; that the church is racist and in need of great change; that the church has "a strong African history but it's never expressed." One person wanted to know "how many of us are brainwashed so that we think we need permission to be, do, or think?" Others decried the closing of church schools, and declared that black children were being short-changed. One participant said that there should be at least one black priest in every black parish, but then went on to say that "it's not a race problem" and that the "church should involve both blacks and whites." Charles Murry, the Jesuit, summed it up for me this way: "Some of us are real outsiders fighting to get in. Others think the church is making progress. Still others say, 'We're in, but we're not yet there.'"



I visited Ray East, who succeeded George Stallings as pastor of St. Teresa of Avila parish in southeast Washington. East told me that he saw the church as "neither the whore of Babylon nor a superchurch. But it is a herald and a healer." East had just come from presiding at the funeral of a black D.C. cop who had been killed by a drug trafficker. Four robberies and two murders had taken place within a few blocks of the rectory that week.

On a ride through the neighborhood, people driving past on a cross-street honked their horns, smiled, and waved to East. I was reminded of what Bishop John Ricard had told me when I visited a neighborhood with him in northeast Baltimore: that next to the government, the church in Baltimore is the largest single provider of social services.

Later, as East and I passed a set of row houses, we noticed a young white man getting into an expensive double-parked car with Virginia plates. "Picking up drugs," East commented. He showed me a housing project where people have been gunned down by drug dealers. We drove to the top of a hill overlooking the Potomac, the Capitol, and the Washington Monument. Behind us was Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. Its African-American congregation is large, and, according to East, quite satisfied. East then talked sadly, but without rancor, about how George Stallings's Imani Temple has cut the number of his parishioners in half.

"We are in love with a vision of the church that speaks about spirituality as a transformative force that will make us and the world different," Brother Cyprian Rowe had told the gathering at St. Augustine's. "That is what we mean when we say yes to the church. If that is not what we mean, then we too are in sin, because the bishops said that racism is sin.... The church that we love we fail, if we do not try to transform it." It may be that when it comes to the church in the United States, the healer will prove to be the one who so often has been hurt; that the herald will be the one whose voice has so often been discounted. And then no longer will we hear anyone say: "As soon as we finished renovating the church and the school, the archdiocese sold them."

AL LEVINE

Al Levine is a free-lance writer living in Washington, D.C.

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JOURNEY TO LIBYA

QADDAFI'S REVOLUTION

PROBING THE PARADOXES

It was July 1989, and although it was still early morning, it was hot. I had taken the night flight from Benghazi to Tripoli, Libya aboard an aging and decrepit Rumanian airliner, with a Rumanian flight crew. The lavatories did not work, the ventilation was woefully inadequate, and engine heat poured into the cabin from gaping cracks in the floor.

The appalling condition of the plane provided a firsthand glimpse of the effects the U.S. technology/trade embargo is having on life here. Unable to service a domestic airline fleet made up primarily of U.S.-made planes, and hampered by a severe labor shortage, Libya buys such services from nations willing to provide them.

I checked into a hotel room and looked out my window toward the harbor where cargo ships were at rest: past the breakwater rolled the sparkling turquoise waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Libya—land of Muammar Qaddafi, the Sahara—is officially called the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Across the road, waiting for the foreign workers who dominate the labor pool, lay a morass of construction equipment. Such equipment appears everywhere in Libya as the country celebrates, with public works projects aplenty, the twentieth anniversary of its revolution.

The Qaddafi revolution does not fit easily into traditional categories. Although it is basically socialist, the most important dimensions of the national economy—the oil sector and public-works projects—remain as state-capitalism. The revolution also includes a significant, if little known experiment in direct democracy, with 723 "Basic People's Congresses" at the core. These congresses could be likened to New England town meetings, dealing with local and domestic policy issues. But when blended with the near autocracy Qaddafi enjoys on international issues, where his nonalignment and Pan-Arabism generally carry the day, the mix results in a unique breed of political animal.

Staunchly anti-Communist, Qaddafi has tried to engineer an egalitarian revolution that will also be true to traditional Arab and Islamic values. This is no easy task, and is perhaps best revealed in the changing role of women in Libyan society.

Libyan women traditionally have not been seen outside the home. Their appalling 98 percent illiteracy rate in 1959 amply reflected this. Today, however, Libyan women make up over 50 percent of the university student body and are encouraged to aspire to a full range of careers. They appear to be making some inroads into such traditionally male arenas as engineering and architecture.

Qaddafi is at the forefront of these changes, often forcing and cajoling the nation long before much of the society is ready for them. He seems to see women's rights as a litmus test for the egalitarian society he wants to build in Libya. However, while Qaddafi encourages and challenges women to throw off the *hijab* (head scarf) and the *safsari* (white linen head and body wrap) as affronts to their dignity, he underscores the traditional Islamic division of family labor that leaves all the parenting and household duties to the women.

Nawal Adwan is a twenty-year-old pharmacy student at Tripoli University. Dressed in fashionable Western clothes, Adwan highlights this problem as it applies to the many women now choosing to be doctors: "A doctor is on call all the time and has to go out at night too. But Libyan women still have duties at home, and it is not common for them to go out at night." According to Adwan, "the problem now is that women are still afraid. We need more courage to take the rights that are ours."

Not surprisingly, the women's issue in Libya is deeply intertwined with other social issues. Since the late 1970s, the Islamic world has witnessed a tremendous revival of fundamentalism, usually accompanied by a panoply of conservative social, legal, and religious measures. Qaddafi presents himself as a religious reformer, developing a modern and sometimes progressive synthesis of religion and culture that will move Libya into modernity. In so doing, he has often had to stand against the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism in Libya. Still, Libya has not been entirely free of these influences.

In the last year many young women have begun to wear the *hijab* or the *safsari* as an outward sign of their religious zeal. At Tripoli University today, some women are wearing the most fashionable Western dress; others wear a peculiar mix of Western and traditionally modest Arab styles with a full scarf; still others are blanketed in the *milava*, the traditional, full-length, black dress and head covering. While Qaddafi has chosen to address these developments directly, with no-holds-barred speeches on the university campuses, critics are convinced that there are better ways to get the same message across.

Ramaden Imteres, a professor of medicine and former dean of the medical school, says, "Instead of talking about the issue itself, whether it be the veil or some other conservative religious issue, you must educate the whole person. The other issues will then take care of themselves. You can't fight fundamentalism directly...."

Generally, support for Qaddafi is strong. People repeatedly point to the free and compulsory educational system, the free health care, and the pension system as welcome fruits of the Qaddafi revolution. Above all, though, they seem most thankful for the massive public works construction, especially housing. Libya has nearly achieved its goal of universal home ownership, abolishing the landlord-renter relationship as inherently unfair, an indignity to the renter.

Of course, some Libyans are disgruntled. Shopkeepers are bitter about the government monopoly on imported goods and the stifling effect it has had on the marketplace in a nation that still has virtually no manufacturing base. Some resent what they call Qaddafi's troublemaking, creating unnecessary economic and political problems for Libya. Because of the Basic People's Congresses and the experiment in "direct democracy," some

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say they find speaking up a maddening experience: as one shopkeeper put it, "If you try and criticize the government, they tell you there is no government, that you are the government!"

Qaddafi has embarked on human rights and prison reforms during the last two years at least in part to offset the U.S. campaign to isolate Libya. Qaddafi was filmed bulldozing the central prison where most of the political prisoners had been held. On March 3, 1988, he declared there should no longer be any prisoners held because of political opinions, and then publicly destroyed lists of names of Libyans who had not been allowed to travel overseas because of their political activities.

How genuine are these developments?

Sassi Salem Hadj is a lawyer and member of the executive committee of the newly established (May 1989) independent Human Rights Committee in Libya (not to be confused with the government-affiliated Human Rights Committee of the High Court). For the past decade, he has defended political activists who have run afoul of the state; in 1988 he published a book arguing against the death penalty in Libya. Hadj said he personally knew of at least 20 people who remain imprisoned for political reasons. He and others estimate that there are probably between 20 and 100 political prisoners still denied freedom, down from 400-500 just a few years ago. Hadj explained that the birth of the watchdog rights committee resulted from an awareness among many—Qaddafi included—that "the revolutionary period is over. Things are stabilized now and we should not be employing these old, repressive measures."

Libya has long been deeply involved in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and Qaddafi has always maintained an especially hard line. He insists the issue can only be solved through the destruction of the state of Israel.

In December 1988, Qaddafi topped off a visit to Tunisia—that was otherwise highly successful in Pan-Arabic terms—by denouncing Yasir Arafat for recognizing Israel. While other nations and organizations are finally embracing the two-state model as a prerequisite for an enduring solution, Libya continues as the financial sugar daddy for the most rejectionist and terrorist-prone elements of the Palestinian struggle.

When discussing this, as well as Libyan funding for the IRA and other such issues, Libyans insist on their right to aid what they perceive to be liberationist struggles. Ibrahim Aboukhuzan, the vice-president of the People's General Assembly, claims, "As a basic principle, we support independent and revolutionary movements; but we don't intervene in the means they choose to conduct their struggles." Aboukhuzan recalled Libya's history of colonialism and insisted on a right to reject imperialist influences with whatever means necessary.

The May 1986 U.S. bombing of Benghazi and Qaddafi's Tripoli home killed about fifty people instantly, perhaps another fifty as people fled the city in panic. In Libya, its main effect has been to consolidate support for Qaddafi in an unprecedented way. Coming as it did in the middle of the night in civilian neighborhoods, the bombing has become something of a national obsession. Nawal Adwan told me that the bombing damaged her grandmother's house, killing two of her cousins. Although three years have passed, Qaddafi's home lies in the state in which it was found on the morning after the bombing. Most Libyans remain incredulous and outraged by the incident.

To date, the U.S. still refuses to resume diplomatic relations with Libya. Even now, however, one could wish that Americans might come to know more than they do about Libya under Qaddafi. U.S. media were positively celebratory about the bombing attack; before and after that event, however, their viewers and readers have had almost no opportunity to know why its probable chief target stays firmly in place as Libya's leader.

PATRICK G. COY

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OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

TALES FROM THE BASEMENT

IT WAS A DARK & GLOOMY NIGHT...

Since it's close to Halloween, it seems like a good time for ghost stories. But since this is a serious magazine, before telling ghost stories let me make my nod to seriousness by saying that Western deductive logic is a good, limited way to understand and explain some things. Other things, however, it is not so good at explaining. Not everything is quantifiable or replicable in a laboratory, and there is more to the way things are than you can describe by weighing or measuring them. I can understand why anyone would listen to ghost stories somewhat skeptically. I'm agnostic about them myself. I was moved from outright disbelief in ghosts to a less certain agnosticism by an experience we had, and by the witness of an entirely credible friend. I will say only that it impresses me that these stories have to do with people who have been in one place for a long time. It could be that ghosts—or at least ghost stories—aren't going to happen often, or at all, in a culture where nothing lasts long and no one stays in one place long enough to make the kind of impression necessary to haunt it. (He riffles through the papers, taps them upright the way news readers do to make it look as if they are really working, takes a final sip of water, and leaves the podium.)

We moved into a house in an old neighborhood toward the center of town. An old woman lived next door when we first moved in. She was fiercely independent and very proud. She let it be known when we offered to drive her somewhere once

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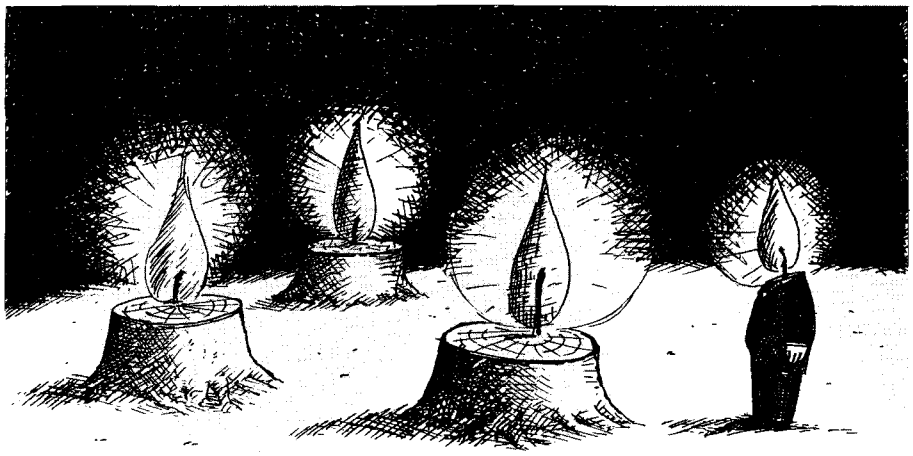

that she was used to taking care of things *on her own* (emphasis very much hers). She and her late husband had bought another house across the street for her mother, who died years before, and that house had been uninhabited ever since. The old woman told me that when she first moved into her house she was a young bride, and the city's southern limit lay only a few lots away. Right beyond it were fields, and on harvest evenings she could hear the corn hitting the wagons' wooden backboards as she lay in bed. She had no children, and spent a lot of her time tending the yard outside.

When she died it turned out that the interior of the house was in terrible shape. It was rented with minimal repairs to a series of tenants. One of them was a woman who lived there with her two children as her marriage dissolved, and, to make some of the extra money she needed, she sublet parts of the house (quite illegally) to other people. One night there was chaos there. It had been a tense week: her divorce became final and she broke a bone in her foot, and then one of the tenants tried to commit suicide. A door began to bang, as if a strong wind were blowing it. She wedged things under it, but it worked its way loose and nothing seemed to stop it for awhile.

The woman came next door, and asked if she could have a glass of wine with us to relax. She told us about the wild night, and said that when the door began to slam her adolescent daughter told her, "It's Mrs. Hunter's spirit." Her mother, understandably, wondered about this and asked what she meant. "I hear her moving around," the girl said. "She's always moving around in the basement."

What the woman and her daughter didn't know, but we did, was that Mrs. Hunter had grown senile and, it was learned after her death, spent the last year of her life living in the basement.

How about that? More: the house went unoccupied for a long time, and my daughter told us that at night she saw lights moving around inside the house from her bedroom window. We told her that these were car reflections, street light reflections—something reasonable-sounding. She never really believed us. They weren't like that kind of light, she said.

Remember Mrs. Hunter's mother's house, the uninhabited one, across the street? A friend who grew up next door to it told us that his sister always drew the shades on her window, because she was afraid of the strange lights moving around inside the empty house next door.

Henry James said, "only connect," so I will. The friend with the scared sister grew up, entered the Peace Corps, and married a woman from the South Pacific, where he decided to live. He and his wife are politically active; she teaches science. Modern folks.

When they visited us we talked about the neighborhood, the one he grew up in, and our ghost story came up. That's when he told us about his sister. Then he told us better stories—true ones, he insists, and I believe him—from their island. Once, at a family feast, he and his father-in-law (who has an unusual ability to see ghosts) both noticed a man standing at the doorway. The visitor was unusual on two accounts. He simply stood, looking in without joining the company, and he was wearing traditional native dress; no one else there was. He didn't respond to the invitation to enter, but went away. My friend's father-in-law was disturbed, because he knew that the visitor lived some distance away. The next day they learned that the man had not in fact visited them, but had died in his own village the night before.

A Catholic missionary priest lives near a place where the dead are said to take their leave of the island. People say their voices can be heard at night. The priest told my friend that he also hears their voices, and prays that their leaving will be peaceful.

There were other stories that night, of animals who serve as totems cursing those who attack them, weeping women who vanish mysteriously, all of them the classic sort of ghost story. These stories are found in every age and culture, and they are remarkably similar.

Don't you feel foolish for having read this far? And isn't it pretty interesting even if you don't believe it, even if you believe that all of these things can be explained without your having to believe that ghosts are real? I remember reading ghost stories when I was small and being frightened and loving it. I both did and didn't want them to be true.

Almost everyone loves them, though. The night my friend from the South Pacific told us these stories he and his wife said that they would never have talked about them openly back home. The ghosts are too close there. On the other hand, we all really enjoyed that evening of mysterious tales. And when our children were old enough to tell them the story without having to spend the night reassuring them, my wife and I told them about Mrs. Hunter's house and the slamming door, and what my friend had said about the mysterious lights in the house across the street. My daughter's reaction was a mild sort of "I told you so" response; my son seemed to let it drift past him. We were surprised at this mild reaction.

But not more than half an hour later we noticed that most of the kids in the neighborhood were gathered at the basement windows of the house next door—it was deserted once again—peering in, waiting for something strange to appear.

Happy Halloween. □

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WALKING THE TIGHTROPE OF MYSTERY

THE LONELY SEEKERS OF BRIAN MOORE

J.V. LONG

Both St. Bernard and Pascal tell us that we wouldn't look for God unless God had already found us. Brian Moore's fiction suggests that such searching and such discovery are perilous indeed. Perilous and inescapable if human beings are ever fully to find themselves, as they are meant to, in the heart of the creator.

Mr. Moore's imaginative context is richly Roman Catholic—the list of his titles is suffused with a vocabulary which is, sadly, becoming merely nostalgic: passion, temptation, feast, limbo, heaven, etc.—but the dilemmas his most complex characters face are too serious, too intricate, too important to be contained within an established institutional context. The church as such is woven deep into the fabric of Moore's fictional world, but, even for characters who are priests and nuns, the institution is never a sufficient mediator between suffering, uncertain men and women, and the mystery of God. At the end of a journey into the pagan wilds of seventeenth-century Canada, Laforgue, a Jesuit in Moore's *Black Robe*, contemplates a statue of the Virgin: "He looked at the empty eyes of the statuette as though, in them, some hint might be given him of that mystery which is the silence of God."

Moore makes us face the reality of the church in our lives in this time: the force of the church is diminished as an intellectual, imaginative backdrop to, or moral arbiter in, any literature which might self-consciously want to claim itself as "Catholic." The English critic and "Catholic novelist" David Lodge has described the dilemma faced by Roman Catholic fiction writers in the era after the Second Vatican Council. "I don't think that one can talk of the Catholic novel in quite such sharply-defined terms any more.... The church no longer presents that sort of monolithic, unified, uniform view of life which it once did." The remedies for alienation and acedia and despair in the works of Evelyn Waugh or Graham Greene, for example, were not only clearly spiritual in character, but also deliberately Roman Catholic in practice. Greene's gifts are still intact, which is real grace for us all. Waugh's eccentricities were clear even before the Vatican council, but he was hit hard by its innovations ("...1965 was a bad year for me in a number of ways—dentistry, deaths of friends, the *'aggiornamento.'* I try to face the new wars with resignation.") There was clarity and fidelity within that eccentricity, however. Waugh's dissections of the vacuous and terrifying Modern Age, especially as it pertains to the church, appear increasingly resonant.

Waugh and Greene remain significant Catholic writers despite their differences: Waugh was clearly more interested in sin, Greene in sinners. Their serious work describes human behavior and its consequences in the vocabulary—sin, forgiveness, grace—of a Catholic culture that seems to have eroded.

Brian Moore has inherited a serious legacy from such writers, but not their world of social and religious certainty, of judgment and forgiveness, of manageable mystery. Moore has been left on his own, alone. In *The Doctor's Wife*, Moore's novel in which a Belfast woman flees her husband and secure respectability for love and the chance to find an identity of her own, her brother, a physician, faces his sister's problem. "If this were 1935 and Sheliah were my father's younger sister, the whole discussion

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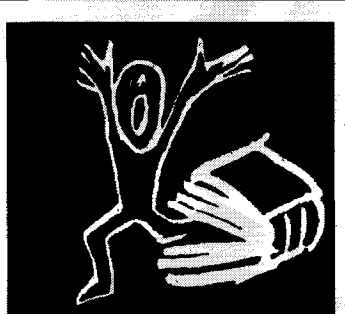
would have been conducted in the context of sin. I can talk about it only in the context of illness. My father would have talked of the moral obligations involved. I can only surmise the emotional risks." Such a woman has been oddly victimized by theology. "The word (God) usually came to her lips these days as a meaningless ejaculation. She no longer prayed. She remembered when all that had changed, at the time of Pope John. It had begun when people lost their fear of hell and damnation. If you no longer feared damnation, you no longer had to believe in heaven." Moore's characters face a moral realm in which the church's judgments on right and wrong are no longer the last word. Good and evil are no less apparent, but while we still confront the uncertainties of our lives and the certainty of our deaths, ambiguity abounds. "'Are we supposed to be happy in this life?' And she laughed and accused me of still being a Catholic. But I said to her, 'No seriously, do you think it's possible for anyone to be more than intermittently happy in life? Continual happiness just isn't a possible state for anyone with a brain in their heads.'"

Moore's characters walk on the tightrope of mystery without that net of Catholic definitions that now seem so arcane. His work conveys an understanding of the nature of loneliness better than that of any writer I can think of. His particular concentration on the various mutations of loneliness, oddly enough, gives his work its particularly Catholic identity. Brian Moore's characters are enmeshed in the evil of loneliness, his novels draw a map of loneliness, a modern hell which is no less punishing nor less perduring than Lucifer's resting place.

These are Moore's themes: loneliness and the search for God. A reader might suspect that the search for God would relieve loneliness by supplying lives with purpose, but Moore's literary imagination is too spiritually complex, his religious sensibility too grounded in sharp, ordinary human perceptions to allow for any easy satisfactions to arrive in the shape of religious fulfillment. In Moore's novels, human loneliness is often the consequence of hiding from God's searches for his creatures. (The psalmist's words echo in Moore's novels, "O where can I go from your spirit, or where can I flee from your face? If I climb the heavens you are there. If I lie in the grave, you are there.") If God ever is found, he confounds all expectations, but loneliness is never avoided.

Moore is adept at creating dark nights for unwilling souls; his inclinations are decidedly mystical, and his allusions in his works to St. John of the Cross and the Carmelite tradition reinforce his characterizations. Moore writes about how God and men and women, in the very intensity of their searchings, often seem to remain unrecognized to each other. Over and over in reading the fifteen novels Moore has written during the past thirty years, I was reminded of a sentence in a letter from the French worker priest Henri Perrin in the mid 1950s (around the time Moore was writing his first novel), "We must try to do our best to break through loneliness, which is the thing most opposed to God."



J.V. Long's critical essay on Brian Moore is another in our series of articles on contemporary Catholic writers of fiction. We have asked our essayists to give an overview of the author's works, showing our readers where and how this writer locates the central human drama, the big questions, the religious crisis of our time. What does the Catholic sensibility of a Brian Moore have to tell us about our common world, about the state of our souls? Previous articles in the series include Rosemary Booth on Mary Gordon (August 12, 1988), John B. Breslin on Andre Dubus (December 2, 1988), Robert E. Hosmer on Muriel Spark (April 21, 1989), Daniel Murtaugh on William Kennedy (May 19, 1989), Paul Baumann on Thomas Keneally (July 14, 1989), and Elizabeth Beverly on Shusaku Endo (September 22, 1989).

Moore's novels are distinguished by the ways different sets of characters cope with the struggles between their hopes and their imperfections. No struggle is denser or more heartbreaking than the one portrayed in that astonishing first novel, *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*. Miss Hearne, even in her spinsterish middle age, is an orphan, abandoned by family and fate and faith, whose only comfort is in her fantasy and in her bottle (which frequently fuels the former).

A product of a respectable middle-class upbringing in her aunt's Belfast home, educated at "the Sacred Heart," but worn into financial and emotional penury by her aunt's prolonged final illness, she is reduced to boarding in bed-sitting houses where, inevitably, the clientele contributes to her sense of the cross she is bearing. Having discovered the solace of drink late in her life, she surrenders to its lure during increasingly frequent binges. As a result, she loses the few piano students she teaches and is constantly changing digs in acquiescence to the offended sensibilities of parents and landladies.

In her latest loneliness, Miss Hearne's fellow boarders include her landlady's son, Bernard (a grotesque not-so-young university student who continues to milk his mother's generosity while he's seducing the teen-aged parlor maid) and her brother, James Madden. Madden is recently returned from America, where he'd worked as a hotel doorman in Times Square, after obtaining a modest sum from an insurance company in an accident settlement.

Unfortunately, Madden and Miss Hearne radically misread each other. Her bearing and polished manners indicate wealth to him; his curiosity and attention, romantic interest to her. After they arrange to spend an evening together, Madden "hurried off

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across the street as though he were afraid she would change her mind and tell him so. It was, she realized, the way she herself left others, after a successful theft of their time, after a promise, so terribly wanted, a promise that she could come again." The phrases are short and strung together in such a way that one feels her tentativeness and her fear.

Miss Hearne is unused to receiving more than cursory attention from anyone, especially from men. Madden appears to be an answer to her prayers. "She gave thanks to the Sacred Heart that he had sent her the trials and tribulations of her last lodgings that she might move to Camden Street and meet Mr. Madden." Obviously, Miss Hearne's prayers have not been casual:

> She had followed her Aunt D'Arcy's lead.... Church affairs, her aunt once said, tend to put one in contact with all sorts of people whom one would prefer not to know socially. Prayer and a rigorous attention to one's religious duties will contribute far more towards one's personal salvation than the bickering that goes on about church bazaars. Miss Hearne had her life-long devotion to the Sacred Heart. He was her guide and comforter. And her terrible judge.... Religion was there.....You could pray for guidance, for help, for her good intentions. Her prayers would be answered. God is good.

Alas, each discovers the other's intention; no one's prayers are answered. Miss Hearne has only one sober bulwark left.

Though she expects rejection from every other front, and is steeled for it, Judith Hearne assaults heaven with her petitions for release from her loneliness and from her sin, the drink:

> O Sacred Heart forgive me, she prayed, her eyes on the small golden door of the tabernacle... .Deserted God, she thought, you wait alone each night while men forget you.... O Sacred Heart, please, I need your strength, your help. Why should life be so hard for me, why am I alone, why did I yield to the temptation of drink, why, why has it all happened like this?.... You, only you know the things I wanted, the home, children to raise up to honour and reverence you.... You have shared my suffering, you know that I love you, please dear Lord, give me a sign, give me strength.

Her desperation is as compelling as her humiliation, and her spirit simply begins to collapse, in the wake of these prayers, when she's turned out of church by a sacristan who's closing it for the night. "When the lights went out it seemed as though the tabernacle were empty.... What if it meant nothing, nothing?"

Miss Hearne can rationalize her travail with the apparatus provided by what she refers to as, "the Faith." In a rigid structure with firm judgments and sure rewards, she has a place. However, if the judgments aren't grounded in a theological reality, "what if the godless were right, what if it all started back aeons ago with fish crawling out of the sea to become men and women?.... In that world, what place had a God who cared for suffering?" She has relied on the church for the sustenance she couldn't find among human beings, and the church thwarts her. The faith is as disappointing and false as every other missed connection in a life that is desiccated and friendless.

Books discussed in this article:
The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne, *Little, Brown, $6.95*
I Am Mary Dunne, *E P Dutton, $7.95*
The Doctor's Wife, *Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $8.95*
Cold Heaven, *Holt, Rinehart & Winston (out of print)*
Black Robe, *E P Dutton (out of print)*

The breakdown she suffers involves a frontal, physical confrontation with the Real Presence in the tabernacle. "What is to become of me, O Lord, alone in this city, with only drink, hateful drink that dulls me, disgraces me, lonely drink that leaves me more lonely, more despised? Why this cross? Give me another, great pain, great illness, anything, but let there be someone to share it. Why do you torture me, alone and silent behind your little door? Why? 'I hate you,' she said, her voice loud and shrill in the silence of the church."

What is understandably hateful is the fact that Judith Hearne has been conditioned to equate her experience of the church with the experience of God. Her life implodes on a set of social structures that are as much informed, and perhaps more informed, by the church as they are by the world. She is isolated by the complacency of an organization that, rather than anticipating the urgency of doubt, only registers irritated surprise when it surfaces. The novel indicts all the forces—religious, cultural, emotional—that have conspired to circumscribe Judith Hearne's aspirations, desires, and hope. Miss Hearne's shrill voice is all the more remarkable and haunting for the skill with which Brian Moore has created the wilderness in which it cries.

Moore is adept at charting the courses of his characters' inner weathers; when they are women, his eye is extraordinarily acute. I happened to have a copy of *I Am Mary Dunne* with me one evening in a theater. Waiting for the performance to begin, the woman sitting next to me noticed the book and said that at the time the book was published (1968) it seemed more immediate and more real to her own experience than anything she'd ever read; her memory of the book was detailed and affectionate.

Written thirteen years after *Judith Hearne*, *I Am Mary Dunne* is a mirror image of the former book. It is a novel of intense reminiscence in which a day in the life of one woman, whose sensibility is inordinately heightened by premenstrual tension, is played against her past in a series of jarring juxtapositions that undermine her fragile, endangered sense of herself. Whereas Judith Hearne seeks to contain her interior terror by wallowing in the memories of her past and in her piety, Mary Dunne hopes to find out who she really is by escaping from hers. Miss Hearne is, almost literally, petrified; Mary Dunne is so diffused that she feels in danger of not being able to keep hold of her sanity, much less her

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identity. Compared to the black hole into which Judith Hearne falls, so dense that no light can escape, each perception Mary Dunne has is a catalyst that leads to an inevitable terror of reflection:

> People who get on the bus at the Seventy-ninth Street stop are usually people who have been to the museum.... But the woman who sat beside me today with her little daughter on her knee—I doubt if she had even been inside the Met. She seemed Puerto Rican, with a tired yellow face.... Hers was the Juarez face: it could be Mexican. No matter which country they came from down there, they are Indians, with an Indian face, the face of the three little girls of my Juarez dooms....

Mary Dunne's dooms are attacks of fundamental forgetfulness: she forgets her name. "I am a changeling who has changed too often, and there are moments when I cannot find my way back." Hers is a ghost story. She's haunted by her past character(s), those Mary Dunnes who maneuvered through work and love and infidelity without finding satisfaction, without finding out who she was.

In serious flight from a devout, provincial Canadian background, Mary Dunne explores all the, formerly forbidden, ambiguities of desire. Her third husband, Terence, is her salvation, in that he seems to provide stability and sensuality. Dunne is fearful that the one thing she hopes to hold onto will not be able to withstand the whirlwind of her own uncertainty: "...he was alive, he was life, not death. I held him and I thought, he is my savior, he restoreth my soul. I heard him ask again what was wrong and all the unreasoning, unreasonable emotions of my state spilled out beyond my control and I held him, kissed him, weeping, saying, 'Tee, Tee, I love you, please love me?'"

Mary Dunne bears scars from her sexual involvements—indeed, some of Moore's characters bear deeper, bloodier such scars—and the erotic is an enormously potent force in Moore's work. (Whether one loses oneself in pleasure or in God, the desire for transcendence permeates all of Moore's novels.) Moreover, the complications which make it difficult for Mary Dunne to find any mooring in her life don't, on the face of it, seem very religious. The supernatural, in fact, doesn't seem at all to apply. However, the composition that she seems intent on putting together from the fragments of her longing and her regret is profoundly, instinctively spiritual. She mimics the first act of the first humans, reported in Genesis; she seeks to mitigate the unknown by giving it a name: "in a few hours I will begin to bleed, and until then I will hold on...I have not changed, I remember who I am and I say it over and over and over, I am Mary Dunne, I am Mary Dunne, I am Mary Dunne."

Fifteen years after *Mary Dunne*, Moore took an ingenious chance with another novel about a woman intent on escaping from the intricacies of her choices. *Cold Heaven* is a simple story: Marie Davenport wants to leave her brilliant, overbearing husband Alex, a doctor, so that she can marry another physician, Daniel Bailey. But Marie has had a vision of the Virgin. Moore is far too skillful to allow this odd occurrence to appear comic. Clearly he's suggesting that amid all the possible manifestations of God's presence in the world, in nature, in art, in human relationships, it is perhaps impossible entirely to avoid the direct and demanding intrusion of the divine into our lives.

Replaying a more or less familiar scenario—even as the apparition at Medjugorje attracts attention from charters and cable television—Marie is told that the Blessed Mother wants the site of the apparition, on the California coast near Carmel, to become a place of pilgrimage, and that she must "tell the priests" what she has seen. When she resists and finds herself in the middle of an astounding series of circumstances, including her husband's recovery from what had seemed a fatal accident, Marie is sure that she's engaged in combat with the Other World. In order to accomplish "their" plan, "they" hold the health of Marie's husband, and her anticipated future happiness (with a new husband), hostage. How strange it sounds in the retelling; how strange in the reading. However, Moore is dead serious in his portrayal of the varieties of religious experience. The novel is peopled with unbelievers, ascetic nuns, a posh monsignor ("God's improbable functionary in his green madras slacks and purple tennis shirt"), and lovers simply trying to connect. Yet this spiritual circus is not absurd.

God appears to individuals; all persons, with the eyes to see, have their own capacities to translate that appearance. Flannery O'Connor wrote, "For the writer of fiction everything has its testing point in the eye, an organ which eventually involves the whole personality and as much of the world as can be got into it...for the Catholic (the roots of the eye) stretch far and away into those depths of mystery which the modern world is divided about—part of it trying to eliminate mystery while another part tries to rediscover it in disciplines less personally demanding than religion." Marie Davenport is taxed for what she has seen, but can finally only surrender to the promise of what she can do. "She thought of that life, that ordinary, muddled life of falling in love and leaving her husband and starting over again: that known and imperfect existence that she had fought to regain against ineluctable forces, inexplicable odds.... She had been returned to ordinary life, to its burdens, its consequences."

Mr. Moore has a large heart for his characters. In a world where God seems, at best, elusive, and loyalty to a church that distrusts human instincts is exhausting, men and women would seem to be severely handicapped in their yearnings for meaning and love. Some of Moore's characters appear fearful of accepting the truth that to flee from one's deepest desires and needs is to flee, as well, from God.

Perhaps even more unnerving is the realization that implicitly occurs again and again in Moore's novels, whether the theme is specifically "religious" or not: if God created his son with a Sacred Heart, all of our hearts are sacred. For some of his characters the realization is inchoate; some, in *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, *Catholics*, *Black Robe*, or *The Color of Blood*, for example, embrace it and suffer the consequences. Most of Brian Moore's characters, and I daresay most of us, flee from such an understanding of the self and its possibilities. Understandably. □

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BARRIERS TO THE SACRAMENTS

THE NEW LITURGICAL LEGALISM

JOSEPH M. CHAMPLIN

Many Catholics remember the church of pre-Vatican II days as rigid and highly legalistic. Those traits seemed to be corrected somewhat by the *aggiornamento* of the council, and since then by the new *Code of Canon Law*, issued in 1983. I contend, however, that in the post-Vatican II era a new kind of legalism has begun to emerge. I am not referring to doctrinal matters. Rather, I am thinking of a new and widespread liturgical legalism—practiced by pastors, liturgists, and parish planning committees—which needs to be moderated by flexiblility and a deeper understanding of the nature of church law.

One need not look far to find the new legalism at work. Here are several specific illustrations:

● When the new rite of reconciliation first appeared in the early seventies, I was deeply involved in the development and promotion of rooms or chapels offering the penitent an option for anonymous or face-to-face reception of this sacrament. Subsequently, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) approved a statement, later confirmed by the Holy See, which called such spaces desirable. Still, the bishops' decrees contained a caution that the freedom of the penitent should always be respected.

Some current policies violate that freedom.

When first communicants are trained only for the face-to-face arrangement, are offered that sole possibility, and are taught that it is the preferred way of receiving reconciliation, these children are deprived of their legitimate options; they are prepared inadequately for adult choices and are subjected to unsound instruction. The best manner of receiving the sacrament is that method, face-to-face or anonymous, with which a penitent feels most comfortable and most effectively can meet the risen, forgiving Christ.

According to the *Notre Dame Study of Parish Life*, about 10 percent of the parishes sampled offer only general absolution, with no scheduled hours for the sacrament of penance. The director of the research, when querried about that point, quickly countered that the priests are always available for anyone who seeks reconciliation. But the absence of advertised periods for confession, practically speaking, tends to force penitents into face-to-face encounters.

At some communal penance services, the liturgy planners arrange or expect penitents to make their confessions in this "open" manner, without the possibility of the anonymous method.

Except for the Notre Dame research, I do not have statistics about the frequency of such practices, only confirmation of their existence. Still, because of the sensitive nature of this sacrament, it seems appropriate to raise the issue of providing choices, lest unwise and inhibiting procedures become commonplace.

● The development of "remembering" rituals modeled on the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) has been strongly promoted and introduced with some success in the United States. Proponents testify that participants have experienced a significant healing of hurts and guilt through the open process of prayer and faith-sharing over a period of time. In certain locations the penitents are "enrolled" as penitents on Ash Wednesday in a public ritual and "reconciled" on Holy Thursday.

Those leaders with whom I have discussed the rite clearly envision this as merely an optional opportunity, not a mandatory requirement for persons seeking to be reconciled with the church. Nevertheless, my concern is with the subtle pressure such a practice places upon all who seek reconciliation. The impression could be spread that to "go back to church," "to go to confession after a long period of time" requires a public acknowledgement of sin and a lengthy series of sessions before reconciliation.

The persons reconciled through the "remembering" rituals I know about are few in number, although the experience appears

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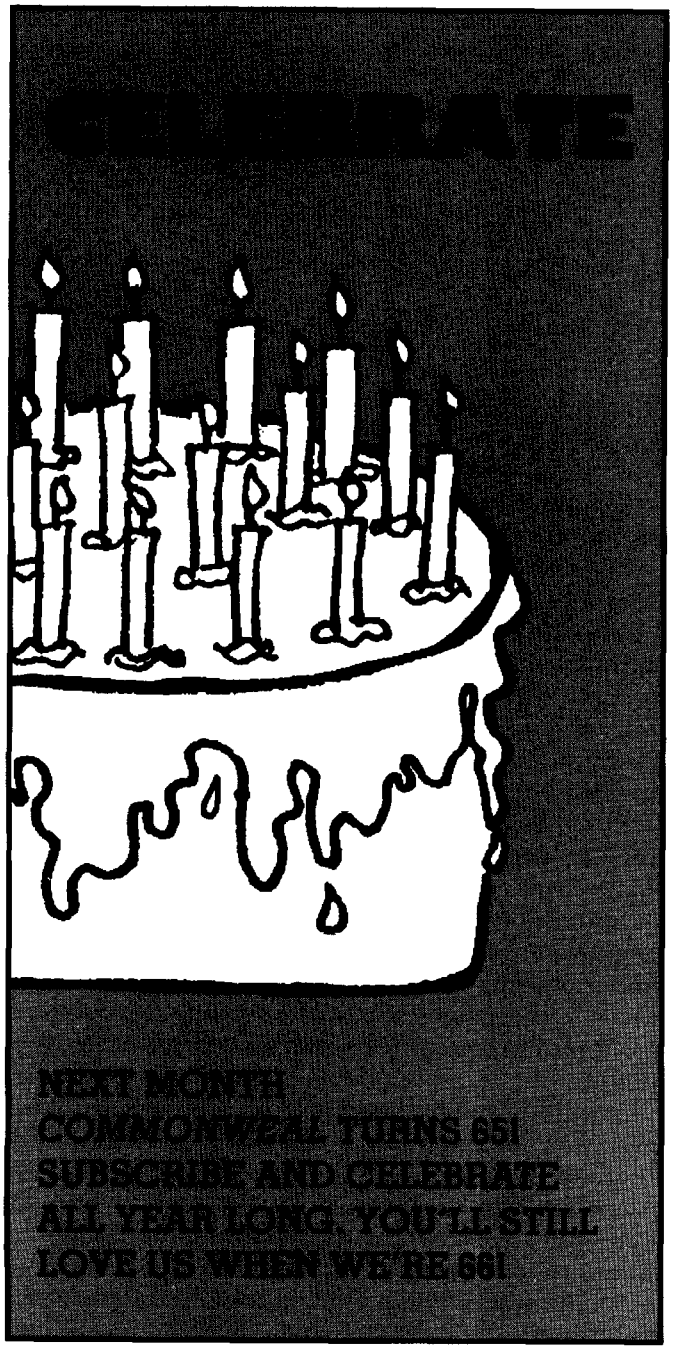

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to be very rich for them. On the other hand, the number of penitents reconciled during the Advent and Lenten seasons through anonymous, but powerful sacramental reconciliation encounters in parishes throughout the country are many.

Without wishing to dampen the enthusiasm of "remembering" advocates, or to disparage creative efforts in liturgical renewal, I offer a word of caution about the potentially harmful effects of promoting this optional ritual and the certainly disastrous impact of imposing it upon all.

● In order to emphasize the total reconciliatory action of the Holy Thursday/Good Friday/Easter Vigil and Sunday events and to promote better celebration of those solemn liturgies, some official documents on the national and diocesan level—as well as the articulated teachings of certain pastoral liturgists—have recommended that there be no scheduled opportunities for reconciliation during Holy Week's Sacred Triduum. Parishioners are encouraged to approach the sacrament beforehand, and pastors usually schedule communal penance services prior to Holy Thursday to care for the spiritual needs of penitents.

The only difficulty with this ideal procedure is that persons who have been absent from church for a lengthy period of time or who have been touched by the unique graces of Holy Week are not aware of these theological developments. Should they be deprived of the sacrament? Should they be forced to wait? Should they be compelled to call the rectory for an appointment?

Pope John Paul II, by his own example on Good Friday in a confessional at St. Peter's and by his words to the New York State bishops on their *ad limina* visit, has urged priests to make scheduled opportunities available for reconciliation during the Triduum. Those touched in a special way through the events of Holy Week will, he said, thereby have easier opportunities to become reconciled with Christ.

Experience shows that an hour allocated and advertised for the sacrament of penance on Holy Saturday morning will offer such penitents moments for significant spiritual encounters and still enable liturgical ministers properly to prepare to celebrate the sacred rites of those days.

● As a staff person at the Liturgy Secretariat for the NCCB from 1968-71, I had firsthand experience of the difficulty of obtaining official approbation for Communion in the hand. We spent many hours developing a suitable educational process for its introduction throughout the U.S.

The relatively smooth implementation of this procedure, and of Communion with bread *and cup*, resulted, I believe, from a fairly good prior catechesis and from the optional nature of both practices. No one was forced to receive in the hand or from the cup.

Probably a majority of Catholics in the U.S. today opt for Communion in the hand, while only a minority select reception of the Eucharist from the chalice. But every individual enjoys the freedom to make those choices.

Training first communicants to receive only in the hand, teaching that this is the preferred mode, or failing to offer Communion under both kinds at Mass militates against officially

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endorsed directives.

● The rite of infant baptism suggests celebrating this sacrament at Mass to manifest baptism's special relationship to the Paschal Mystery, the Eucharist, and the Christian community. However, it adds a caution, without explanation, that "this should not be done too often."

Without entering into a discussion of how often or at what Masses a parish should celebrate baptism within Mass, I pose the question: Must all baptisms be before the entire community?

Many, perhaps most, families may desire this type of ritual and rejoice over such a public celebration. But there are some who, for a variety of reasons, find that experience a great burden. Will the pastor or administrator insist on an either at-Mass or no-baptism-at-all response to those people? Has baptism at Mass become an inflexible law instead of a desirable experience? a painfully rigid norm rather than a highly encouraged option?

● In *The Marginal Catholic* (Ave Maria Press, 1989), I have discussed at length what is probably the most pressing and difficult issue facing pastoral leaders in the church today: How do we best respond to inactive Catholic parents who seek baptism for their child or to engaged couples who wish marriage in the church, but who rarely participate in Sunday Eucharist?

Anxious to follow Vatican II declarations which remind us that the sacraments are acts of faith and presuppose belief, clergy and parish staffs have sought to challenge the spiritual apathy of these petitioners by providing instructions to help them understand what the church expects of each sacrament. Clergy and staff urge them to reflect their faith by regular involvement at weekly Mass and in the life of the faith community.

Some, however, in pursuing those noble goals, have erected overly burdensome barriers to the sacraments and established external requisites that go beyond what the universal church calls for in its official documents on baptism and marriage. As surprising as it may seem, the church's worldwide legal regulations are often much more liberal than most American Catholics appreciate. Moreover, current practices in the U.S.—as we have seen in the examples given in this article—are sometimes more restrictive than the universal or national directives they seek to implement. Why? In part, because of the way Americans think about law.

Consider that the majority of the church's universal rules or norms are contained in the *Code of Canon Law*, which follows the European civil or Roman system of law. The Roman legal philosophy presupposes a comprehensive body of laws centered around major principles rather than detailed rules. It enshrines generic values instead of proposing specific regulations. A pastor or pastoral administrator (like a Roman judge) is expected to study the sweeping, universal, and timeless law, then apply, adapt, and interpret it to particular circumstances.

By contrast, the secular legal system in the U.S. (with the exception of the state of Louisiana) has evolved from English common law. In this tradition, laws can be made by judges deciding disputes on a case-by-case basis. The common law judge, or lawyer, studies the past for precedents that may apply to the case at hand. Judges tend to interpret legislation narrowly and inflexibly. As a result, an ever-expanding body of statutory legislation, administrative procedure, and case law covers almost every conceivable situation.

The differences between these two types of legal systems would be immediately apparent to someone visiting both a judge's office and a pastor's study. The judge's office would include bookcases full of volumes containing civil laws and interpretations; the pastor's would contain at most only a shelf of texts on church law, including a copy of the current *Code of Canon Law* and perhaps one or two commentaries. The contemporary *Code* contains less than two thousand canons, yet these touch upon and govern nearly every structure of the Roman Catholic church; many of these are not statutes, but exhortative or theological statements.

Both legal systems, the European/Roman civil law and the Anglo-American/common law, recognize that all human laws, including church rules (in contrast to divine commands) are necessarily imperfect; laws tend to lag behind life; laws never can adequately cover every individual case or circumstance. However, both legal systems provide for such limitations in different ways. The Anglo-American approach has an enormous, complex corpus of laws to cover fine details; the Roman approach contains general laws which rarely and with great reluctance are changed, requiring the local administrator to apply these norms in a flexible way to particular cases.

So what is at issue here? The difficulty for the Catholic church in the U.S. is that Americans often interpret church laws in the same manner that they regard secular laws. As John A. Alesandro has suggested in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (Paulist), we Americans consider the law to be supreme. No person should be above the law. Laws should cover almost every case. There ought to be few exceptions. If the law does not make sense, we expect it to be changed. Exemptions are not to be granted easily. These strict, letter-of-the-law attitudes and interpretations, when carried over to canon law, and to liturgical guidelines, cause needless hardship and make the church seem harsh, rigid, and insensitive.

The Reverend John Catoir, director of the Christophers, has commented that for many Catholics and non-Catholics in our country, the church is not viewed as compassionate and forgiving, but as harsh and cruel. According to Catoir, the church has performed its necessary and valid role of trying to be faithful to Jesus' teaching by asserting a right or correct position on issues such as sex, war and peace, capital punishment, and abortion. But in seeking to fulfill that function it has, in his judgment, too often failed to communicate God's unchanging mercy and love. Instead, it conveys the image of a "rigorous institution tirelessly imposing the full demands of Christian law upon its members."

This phenomenon makes it all the more imperative that church law be read and applied in the U.S. according to the flexible, adaptable manner in which it was written, and by which it has been traditionally interpreted. □

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DANIEL: BELOVED BY GOD & BY ME

FILLING HIS SIZE-TWELVE SHOES

BRIDGET BALTHROP MORTON

I took my son Daniel, who at thirteen, as his father says, is "hormones with feet," to see Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*. Daniel had been leading me toward the film since he first saw a bit about it on an MTV news program early in the summer. Since I still act as Daniel's censor, I read what I could find about the movie, and agreed to take him when we could coordinate it. *Finally* (his word), the night before school started, we managed to get it together. Daniel and I slid down in the cheap seats to watch heat and frustration erupt into violence in a black neighborhood in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Each of us delighted in the early part of the film, with its deft characterizations: Mookie, the likable but irresponsible pizza deliveryman who prides himself on his paying job, but generally ignores his young son and Tina, one sexy bitch and the child's mother; Radio Raheem, who roams through the streets and into the pizza parlor with his outsize boom box blasting Public Enemy's "Fight the Power"; the white man Sal, who makes pizzas and money, argues ineffectively with his sons, and brandishes a baseball bat when he's angry; Sweet Dick Willie and his friends, who hang out on the corner like Macbeth's witches, commenting on everything and doing nothing.

There were four people in the theater that night, all of us white. I kept wondering through this wacky and wildly disturbing film, how it would be to see it with a large audience. A large black audience.

The movie is too realistic to be a metaphor, in its joy as well as its violence and pain. Daniel and I watched together, but I was never more aware of how different points of view will color one's perceptions. Daniel's a skater, a "home boy"; he wears black tee-shirts and likes rap and hard-core music like Black Flag and ice-T. The public junior high school he attends has a large percentage of black students, and on more than one occasion, Dan's said to me that he has a black attitude; he sometimes thinks like a black person. I've puzzled over what that might mean. That he sees his black friends' flair and passion for living? That he admires their solidarity and their colorful speech? That he identifies with their struggle for equality?

My son's junior high is renowned for its award-winning science program. Daniel talks more about the fights, unfortunately a daily affair in our Brevard County, Florida, junior high schools. Just around the corner from his school lies Lipscomb Street Park, a public park in the heart of our city, in an area I've heard others call "Blacktown." Until very recently, I taught young kids creative writing at the park.

I know from reading the papers that drug deals go down on the fringes of the park, and that murders have occurred near the school. But the neighborhood itself, once the residents expected my presence, felt safe enough to me; I worked there part-time for nearly two years. I saw poverty there, and pain. I saw men and boys like Sweet Dick Willie, swilling beer on street corners because they didn't have jobs. I also met men like John Holder, who worked with me in the park, but spent his spare time setting up a program to teach trades to the unemployed. I've also seen the magnificent eyes of children learning to read, or speaking stories and poems extraordinary in their honesty and beauty, like six-year-old Eylenne's celebration of herself:

I like black
'cause I got on black socks
'cause I'm black
'cause my Mama black
and my sister is brown

When I was Daniel's age, during the turbulent sixties and my own hormonal storm, I was subject to violent rages, during which I felt no control, only fury and the surge of blood through my wrists. I recognized early my potential for violence, should anger explode involuntarily. I became a pacifist, I guess in self-defense, to preserve my self-respect and do no harm to others. I am an inadequate pacifist, because although I believe that humans on their best behavior inflict no suffering on others, I find I am rarely on my best behavior; I am not patient, I lose my temper, I am sometimes verbally unkind, even assaultive. But I am convinced that my own long road to salvation will result from my efforts to accept myself as I am and then direct my passion away from anger and toward the service of God's beloved, wherever they are. Daniel, beloved by God and by me, thinks pacifism is, to use his vocabulary, "lame," though he's willing, when he's not too tired or too hungry, to see the value of a mother who will bring him a present from a peace demonstration at Cape Canaveral; he posted the sticker across his waterbed frame: QUESTION AUTHORITY.

So of course he questions mine. Daniel's response to the Bed-Stuy riot in *Do the Right Thing* breaks my heart: "Sal had it coming ...I'd kill him.... What else could they do?"

What else could they do? I tried to talk about that, reminding my son of the old drunk, Da Mayor's, plea in the movie that they

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not hurt one another, how each single person might have planned and practiced nonviolence. But Daniel answers, "You don't understand."

And I don't. Spike Lee's movie dictates no choices. It reports one man's vision, a vision of frustration and waste in a culture and economy predicated on oppression and injustice. But Spike Lee doesn't understand either, or his movie would have a clearer message. He ends it with two quotations, one each from Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, whose faces smile out of flames in the movie's last searing image. Martin Luther King, Jr. says violence is "impractical" and "immoral," whereas Malcolm X, whom Lee quotes last, says violence in self-defense can be acceptable, even "intelligent." But is it self-defense, or intelligence to destroy a pizza parlor in your neighborhood because it's run by a bigot? Or because someone else with power—a policeman, in this case—killed your friend? Even if Spike Lee believes that, surely he sees that it's self- (and race-) defeating.

But this is intellectual wrangling, and I find my patience and my pacifism are tested most when I try to deal with real issues and the people I love. My concern is Daniel, and the age-old adolescent lament: "You don't understand." How does he envision the world? And how would he build the world of his dreams?

Monday afternoon after that first day of school, I picked an exhausted Daniel up from football practice in Florida's 90° heat. "Boys are dropping like flies," he told me. "One boy threw up three times before he quit, and Coach told us not to laugh, that he'd done a brave thing even to try." He stared out the window. "Nobody was laughing anyway."

And then he told me he'd tried to reassure that boy in the locker room. "I tried to say it was okay not to play football, but he just wouldn't listen. He said, 'I guess I'm not enough of a man.' It's really sad," Daniel said, "he doesn't think very well of himself."

On the weekend Daniel's friend Ethan sat at our kitchen table, and asked me if I knew about the plan the two boys had devised for Jerusalem. "They're always fighting over there," Ethan told me, "and it's a holy city for all of them, Christians and Moslems and Jews. So why not turn it into a country of its own, a city-state like the Vatican, and let a council of one leader from each religion run the country?"

"Ethan," I said, "this is your idea?"

"Mine and Dan's," Ethan said.

I looked from one young face to the other. "What made you think about it?" I asked.

Daniel merely smiled. "Somebody," he said, "has to worry about the next generation."

For today, at least, that someone isn't me. No matter what Daniel says about violence or the need for an active self-defense, my thirteen-year-old son is not simply spinning the wheels on his skateboard. He hates to go to Mass, as he regularly tells me, but he's doing a fine job of filling his size-12 shoes. In school, in global considerations, he's searching for answers and finding hope in a world that at times seems to defy all virtue.

What else can any of us do? □

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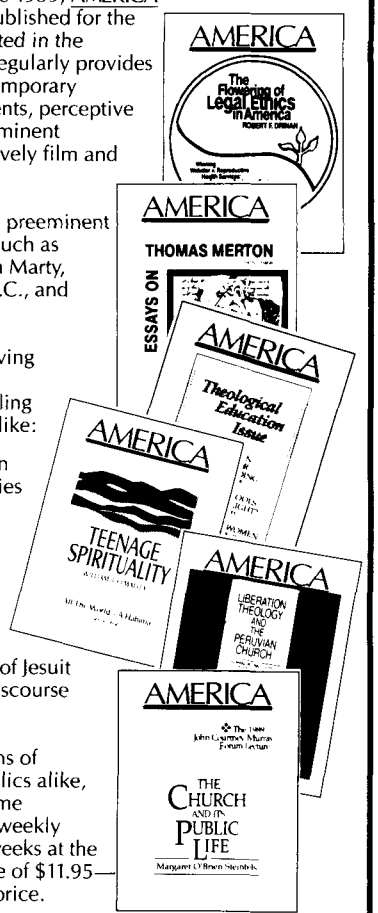

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POEMS
Erica Mapp

Tarascon Diligence
(Vincent van Gogh, October 1888, Arles)

Circles can circumvent comprehension,
Sides seem to make no sense to shape a sphere.
Weary of back and forth between the worlds,
Circumlocution stutters to a stop.
The spinning wheels, dusty interior,
Rusting chassis, come finally to rest
On paths as insubstantial as the clouds.
Grounded on air, the world turns upside down,
The shuttered façade falls to form a bridge.
Everyone's sleeping. Close your burning eyes,
Diligence is a mad dog in the sun.
Stop fighting for perspective as the path
Refuses to lie flat till you step back.
At last…you grasp the breath between the wheels,
Convey the shadows purple as a bruise;
Through open windows you transport the light,
Getting the gold by way of red and green
As blue departs from paint, ethereal.

Mountains at St. Remy
(Vincent van Gogh, July 1889)

Up closer you reproach the hostile hills
The passionate impasto of their heights.
What seemed an invitation from afar
Was your own longing, prelude to your rage.
Baffled, you contemplate the stony foot;
The gargoyle offers an impassive face,
Puts up its massive fist, a crest, and wings.
July heat rises trembling in the sky,
The sullen air, a ready tinder-box.
The promise of the hut hidden in trees
Will not be kept; the road leads you nowhere.
Give up. Go back. Retrace the way you came,
Hearing the flowers snicker at your back.
You made your world impossible to scale.

The Garden of St. Paul's Hospital in Arles
(Vincent van Gogh, October 1889)

Let tongues of flaming color speak for me
For I am struck dumfounded by the light.
Diffuse, it unifies the elements,
Diffracting vision into colored shards,
And I, ecstatic with lucidity,
Feel wind move in the trees, and I am moved.
I am in heaven looking at the sky,
No ordinary path has brought me here.
Infinite time…years fall away like leaves,
I trample time, regenerated, new,
Working like mad, like one who is possessed,
I have found peace in work, such work is blessed.
This is the different light I came to see,
Now no walls hold me; light has set me free.

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TAKE YOUR GALOSHES

'SEA OF LOVE' & 'BLACK RAIN'

As the sexually voracious Helen in *Sea of Love*, Ellen Barkin goes at men like Giants linebacker Lawrence Taylor goes after opposing quarterbacks. You shudder at the collision, and wonder how anyone survives the mauling. This is steamy stuff, with a bewildered but grateful-looking Al Pacino left gasping for air and pawing the walls. It only starts to get silly when Barkin is called upon to molest a couple of voluptuous but otherwise innocent-looking vegetables at a Manhattan market. The erotic is never far from the comic in the aphrodisiacal wonderland of the movies.

Sea of Love, with its throbbing saxophone music, Manhattan night skyline, dingy apartments and hallways, is a genre picture, a double jigger of *film noir* washed down with the usual murder and sexual problem-solving. Barkin is good as the predatory Helen. Pacino is better as Frank Keller, a veteran New York City detective who goes home to an empty apartment and a diminishing liquor supply.

Pacino, who once ruled the world as the youthful Don Corleone in *The Godfather*, may now have the most interesting face in movies. With his immensely sad, somehow broken features and his dark, heavy-lidded eyes, he seems to have dragged himself back uncertainly from some ineffable catastrophe. One is tempted to think of his as the very face of New York City itself.

Sea of Love, written by New Yorker Richard Price (*The Color of Money*), pulses with the city's easy cynicism and heartfelt paranoia, and is propped up with New York's own kind of sentimentality. Everyone is on the make, everyone bends the rules. Life in the big, impossible beehive drives people to desperate remedies—to strangers. Humiliation, sometimes even death, follows. *Sea of Love* is sentimental enough to imply that New York's dangers are the price you must pay for passion.

Screenwriter Price always has been good with street punks and certain of New York's grittier hothouse qualities. He knows how New Yorkers talk. His raunchy first novel, *The Wanderers*, about a group of toughs growing up in the Bronx, is by turns realistic and mythological. It's like taking a trip to another planet. In *Sea of Love*, a scene in which a cheap hood in a shiny jacket and a pompadour confronts Pacino in a fancy shoe store could have come right out of the revelatory world of *The Wanderers*.

Price, with the help of director Harold Becker (*The Onion Field*), gives Pacino plenty to work with. His cops are earthy and shrewd. There's near genius in the movie's early scene where Keller and his partner argue over Keller's wife's desertion as they inspect and handle the naked body of a murder victim. With his evasive manners and prickly temperament, Pacino gives Keller an emphatic presence. Cops, like priests, are always being lied to, and Pacino carries that wearying knowledge with a bedraggled dignity. Keller's delight and confusion over Helen, his fear that she might in fact be the murderer, move across Pacino's hard, dark face like clouds mottling the ocean's surface.

On plot, where *Sea of Love* needs to be masterful, it's a bit shaky. Keller is tracking down a killer who uses the personal column of a singles magazine to set up victims. The business of rounding up suspects is belabored, and the flushing out of the murderer is about as subtle as a surprise celebrity appearance on a variety show. Long before the fatal confrontation, it is clear only one of two people could have done the dirty work. John Goodman (Rosanne Barr's TV husband), who brings a genial vulgarity to his role as one of Keller's partners, helps breathe life into a sometimes over-stylized story.

As the feverish Helen, Barkin (*Diner*, *The Big Easy*), who has a face Picasso might have put together and a body only God in his infinite generosity could have created, talks and acts like an irritable bus driver. Don't talk to her unless you have exact change. Helen has a face that spells doom for a number of unsuspecting ladies' men, but the story also gives her a small child and an impossibly hard-edged mother. This is pretty lame domestic padding. Barkin plays it in an honest and direct way, but she isn't given much to do beyond the gymnastics.

If *Sea of Love* can't quite keep all its parts moving in unison, Ridley Scott's *Black Rain* leaves its even more lurid material scattered far and wide. Although set in Japan, *Black Rain* is another hardboiled New York detective story. Michael Douglas is the overdone egg, a foul-mouthed hero who, after escorting a prisoner from New York to Osaka, Japan, gets caught up in a horrific war between two local mobsters. Douglas seems as out of place as the movie's protagonist. Snarling and puffing out his chest in earnest, he comes off more as a pensive adolescent than a seasoned big city cop.

Director Scott, creator of the luminous *Blade Runner*, is usually criticized for a devotion to style over substance. He makes the prettiest pictures tell the most inconsequential stories. This is too broad an indictment. But in *Black Rain* Scott does founder. There is some passing interest in seeing the futuristic landscape brilliantly envisioned for Los Angeles in *Blade Runner* echoed eerily in the real world of modern Japan. The crush of people in this urban thriller is claustrophobic, the neon landscape hallucinatory, the tattooed and leather-clad thugs exotic but seemingly a natural extension of a wholly man-made world. It's a dazzling visual flood—even the double-decker street buses have grilles that light up like slot machines. The bars/bordellos gleam with a stainless steel and monochromatic menace.

Scott, who stages atrocities in a steel factory, a subterranean parking garage, and at a terraced farm house, is also inventive with sound. The rhythmic clamor of the steel mill, the echoes in the garage, and the whirling of windmills in the fields surrounding the farm house create a sometimes overwhelming sense of

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suspense and dread. These are more visceral than earned reactions, however.

Douglas plays detective Nick Conklin, a garden variety American hero. Loner, casual dresser, and daredevil, Conklin is tinged by corruption but fearless when facing greater evils. *Black Rain* is a peculiar story, with an almost World War II combat theme. The ethnocentric and inscrutable Japanese are always bowing and scraping before betraying an essentially fiendish nature. But as an individualist, Conklin has the upper hand. There is a good deal of gruesome sword and knife play, with everything from heads to pinkies being chopped off. The moribund storyline even has the Japanese mouthing lines like, "We won the peace," and "You shoved your values down our throats." You'd have thought those clichés had been exhausted in Rep. Richard Gephardt's presidential campaign.

Douglas is no match for Yusaku Matsuda, who plays the monstrous Sato, the psychopathic young Japanese gangster behind all the grisly mutilations. Sato, who smiles with warped pleasure at his own pain, is incorrigible. His peer group is every social worker's nightmare. Within the Japanese mob, Sato's mentors have no more luck than New York's finest in bringing the ambitious hood with the punk hairdo to heel. There seems to be no honor even among the most decorously mannered of thieves. In frustration, the Japanese Godfather can only blame the corrupting influence of American values for his wayward protegé's behavior.

Andy Garcia plays Charlie Vincent, Conklin's doomed partner. Vincent, who cavorts with his Japanese hosts and tries to humor his grim buddy, is marked for death from the moment he appears on a crowded New York street. Such innocence must be snuffed out. Japanese star Ken Takakura waxes obsequious and pious as an Osaka detective, and Kate Capshaw (*The Temple of Doom*) appears in sequined gowns with impressive plunging necklines and backs.

Stay out of this rainstorm if you can.

PAUL BAUMANN

Paul Baumann is a staff writer and movie critic for The Day *in New London, Connecticut. He is filling in for Tom O'Brien, who is on vacation.*

STAGE

SPIRITED REVIVALS

'SWEENEY TODD' & 'PRIVATES'

The new *Sweeney Todd* at the Circle in the Square inevitably lacks the shock and surprise of the original 1979 production of the Stephen Sondheim-Hugh Wheeler musical. Although it is a restaging of last year's revival at the tiny York Theater it does not have the intimacy of the television version (now available on VCR) in which George Hearn is an electrifying Sweeney, even more appealingly frightening than was the admirable Len Cariou. The ghosts of two heavyweight Sweeneys hover over this production, but Bob Gunton holds his own in their company—a forceful, scary, sometimes touching, even playful Sweeney. Beth Fowler, as Mrs. Lovett, stakes her own claim to a character, some small corner of which is forever Angela Lansbury. The two principals are surrounded by a small but strong company (particularly Jim Walton as the sailor), but the real star of the show is Stephen Sondheim. His score gets more impressive with every hearing.

Although London, as a place and as an image of injustice and greed, is at the center of this tale of the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, the original production turned the city into a high tech phenomenon, presumably a metaphor for the ugly side of industrialization. The current production retains the shrill factory whistle to punctuate the narrative at particular grisly moments (sound as exclamation point), but it has neither the space nor the funds for so elegant a set. Instead, the director (Susan H. Schulman) and her designer (James Morgan) have chosen to wrap the audience in a tatty suggestion of the city. Playgoers, who sit as usual on three sides of the Circle playing area, enter beneath hangings that look like a cross between tattered banners and wet wash. Neither these nor the long blue streamers through which the company weaves during the "City on Fire" number seems to have anything to do with Todd's "great black pit" of a London. The audience is enveloped in the city because it is enveloped in the story and the music and the characters. Banners aside, Schulman and Morgan have found the means in the awkward space at the Circle to let the musical happen as it should. There is a permanent set at one end of the playing area, but at the other is a movable, detachable, multilevel set that gives the production the flexibility to present the intermeshing stories and the restlessness of the urban setting.

When the show first appeared, it was labeled—in the program, on the record cover, in the published version—"A Musical Thriller." Musical it is and thrilling, but that is a reductive label that hardly does justice to a work concerned with both social and personal evil. Sweeney, a victim of class privilege, was transported on a false charge to clear the way for the judge's rape of his wife and theft of his daughter. He returns to take revenge on those who wronged him, but he ends by killing at random because "We all deserve to die!" This kind of vigilante justice might be taken as a special case of a Sweeney driven mad had not a recent *Philadelphia Inquirer* carried a story about four white men who beat two black men, waiting on separate corners for buses, because three blacks with no connection to the victims had earlier mugged the girlfriend of one of the baseball bat wielders. Mrs. Lovett, like a looter in St. Croix, has a more practical response to societal inequities. She bakes Todd's victims into meat pies because it "Seems an awful waste.... With the price of meat what it is." The figures were almost totemic in the original, grand grotesques by virtue of their make-up and the performance of Cariou and Lansbury. They are more human as Gunton and Fowler play them, easier to sympathize with, even identify with, which is one of the points of the musical, to elicit our complicity because we find such murderous people so attractive.

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I am not quite sure what is intended by a scene, not in the original, in which the judge flagellates himself while he sings of Johanna, his ward, Todd's daughter, whom he is planning to marry against her will. More human? A masochistic hypocrite? A creative mistake? I vote the last of these; Sondheim should not have restored or added it to the musical.

While *Sweeney Todd* is making a welcome return to Broadway, *Privates on Parade*, another product of the late 1970s, is in New York for the first time—if you do not count the 1982 movie version of the 1977 "play with songs." The Peter Nichols-Denis King show has had a spirited production at the Roundabout. Jim Dale seems to be having a marvelous time with his role as a flamboyantly high camp actor-director. It lets him move from the stage within the stage, on which he plays Marlene Dietrich, Noel Coward, and Carmen Miranda, sometimes chewing up the songs for the sake of broad imitation, to backstage where he can flounce his way through minefields of double-entendres and rest occasionally for a sentimental moment. Simon Jones, who had a small part in the original Aldwych production, plays Major Flack (the role John Cleese played in the film) as a perfect model of a sincerely priggish Christian warrior. The musical numbers, most of which had thematic or character point in the original, have made it to the stage with the fun intact, but the play has undergone some odd changes.

It is set in Singapore and the Malayan jungle in 1948, at the beginning of the guerrilla action which was called the Malayan Emergency ("softly, softly officialese" for war, says Major Flack), and it concerns an army song-and-dance unit caught in an ambush. The play—and even more the film—was as tough as *Sweeney Todd* in its view of a world in which the consequences of colonialism and the British class system make pawns and victims of ordinary men. This version, which seems to be an amalgam of the play and the movie with important hunks of plot and color cut away, is more amiable, except for a scene in which one soldier mourns his dead friend and lover while the major speaks platitudes on the other side of the stage.

Aside from the system, the chief villain of the original piece is Reg, the sergeant-major who stages a fake death for himself and then organizes the attack on his comrades-in-arms. Reg is still a villain at the Roundabout—a woman-beater, a gunrunner, a black marketeer—but his death is real, an event that renders both his early scenes and the attack confusing.

There are a great many small cuts, mostly of very English references in the mouth of Sylvia, the Welsh-Indian woman who has never seen England. Their absence does no great harm to the script; however, the play loses some of its resonance because the England Sylvia has invented out of her dead father's memories and the *London Illustrated News* is no more imaginary to the ordinary soldiers than the Berkshire world Major Flack lives in when he is home. No one is going to worry about the cuts and changes in *Privates on Parade* (except for the occasional niggling scholar of modern drama like me). There is still enough direct and oblique social criticism to feed the playgoers who like a little substance with their fun. For the rest, there is the fun itself.

GERALD WEALES

BOOKS

The thickness of time in a hot Texas town

ORDINARY TIME
A.G. Mojtabai
Doubleday, $17.95, 223 pp.

David Toolan

Years ago, as a temporary resident in the Lone Star state, I had several occasions to drive across the west Texas Panhandle, a horizonless, sun-baked land of pink shale and yellow schist cutting through the thin, dusty topsoil, of low-clinging sage and mesquite, virtually uninhabited except for the skeletal gantries of windmills, the isolated rancher's weather-beaten, tin-roofed bungalow, and yes, here and there in some desolate waste, a seesawing butterfly oil pump (which I would hope had enabled the owner to move without regret to a beachfront in La Jolla!). Then, after endless miles of prairie, a sign like HE IS COMING IN GREAT POWER AND MAJESTY announces a town such as Durance, Texas, the perfect setting for Grace Mojtabai's austere, wonderfully crafted fifth novel—where, as in a story from the most ancient strata of the Bible, everything is fraught with background.

In a town like Durance, as the golden oldie has it, "Ever'body waitin' for somefin... Waitin' for a prize from the big quiz show." You imagine (if you are a New Yorker passing through on the way to elsewhere) that in a place like this the busiest industry must be the production numbers of its numerous evangelical churches, or maybe the cemetery. ("There's more want than work in Durance," thinks one character; it's a place, guesses another, where people's "water, or money, or gas, ran out.") Nothing, you think, ever happens here.

You would be wrong. But to realize it, you would need to settle in for a bit to see the subtle action, and to develop an acute ear, as Ms. Mojtabai does, for the silent suggestions in fragmentary speech. Her

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lucid, minimalist prose concentrates the reader's mind for the task of reading variations of soul-weather. Deftly, she takes in the contrast between the impending, suspenseful big sky and that harsh, flat, strangely beautiful prairie—and works it into the very bones of her characters. They, too, seem to appear out of shale and schist, their dreams, fevered, apocalyptic expectations, their visions of the Holy Virgin in a frying pan (a wonderfully comic scene, that), and their quiet desperation conjured by a remorseless, infinite sky. None of their antics come across as any more exceptional than the region's severities of heat and cold. Extremes are not the focal problem here, however. The motionless, in-between stretches of ordinary, uneventful time—that's the hard, nearly impossible part. That's also the critical test.

Ordinary time, the Catholic priest in this novel reminds himself, is "the longest and hardest season of the liturgical year." (Don't worry, the novel's liturgical frame doesn't call attention to itself.) "Not in the mighty wind, nor in the earthquake, nor the blazing fire, but in the murmuring breeze, the still, small voice. In the yeast working unseen...." Be here now. What could be easier? "Almost anything, actually...Great occasions, miracles, rescues, tribulations, scourges. Epic sacrifice. Anything sudden and vivid.... Anything—anything but the long laboring for the kingdom, the following through, the daily round...."

The daily round, except for those with a sixth sense, is misadventure in the dark. There's Val, the drifter from the east, everything about him "cold anger, cold calm," obsessed with trying to recover his shattered memory—that "he loved what he bought." He's trailed by the heartsick orphan boy, Cleat, who, spooked by trumpeting angels, goes around delivering messages of the Final Coming and plants his hope in stony ground—no not even that, "nothing so steady as ground, nothing but wind, cold wind, blowing in and blowing out the way he came." And there's the widow, Henrietta, proprietor of a diner ("Three Square Meals" it's called) across from the cemetery, who knows a thing or two about training fleas to jump, secretly sleeps with her dolls, and with a sinking heart makes herself up fit to kill and dresses in screaming color like some Mafia moll. An unlikely but fully credible wisdom figure, she has the gift of discernment, has premonitions, can "see things she can't say"—for instance, that her former landlady, who pretended to be a good Christian, harbors demons.

Yes, in a sense Flannery O'Connor would have understood, they're all a little grotesque. Except, maybe, for Father Gilvary, who just may be the most affectingly realized priest to appear in a novel since Bernanos's *Diary of a Country Priest* or Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*. He is pastor of St. Jude's, and in contrast to the triumphalism of Brother Shad and Brother Burch of the Rooftree Pentecostal Church (who in a hilarious incident try to shout Sister Willodene from her coffin), Gilvary naturally ministers to lost causes, never seeing the fruits of his action. His parishioners dying out, eyes glazed with glaucoma, hanging in there despite his secret emptiness, he learns that "he was still what he had always been: himself, a creature among creatures. Never sure. Now he asks only to be of use." Sitting in Henrietta's restaurant morning after morning, warming his hands on a chilled coffee cup, he does not know if his prayer is answered; but she does. Finally, in fact, she knows that she and "the Roman" are a pair who are finished waiting, "alive in the day together."

A measure of Mojtabai's art is that it honors the thickness of time; no need, then, to rush on to the next thing, to bypass the trivialities of the moment, or, for that matter, the seeming inertia of a small, hot Texas town—which, on examination, contains more than enough to go on. These lives, which at first seem but fragments of a broken mirror held up to a bleak, godforsaken landscape, tell quite a story—one that comes, at the end, as revelation. Having interviewed Mojtabai (*Commonweal*, Sept. 26, 1986) after the publication of her remarkable nonfiction book, *Blessed Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, Texas* (Houghton Mifflin), I have been expecting something like this—and I haven't been disappointed. The rivers of west Texas run underground, beneath dry beds of stone, until the winter rains fall—the season of Advent. Mojtabai taps those invisible rivers, turns water into full-bodied wine. □

A CAREFUL COMPENDIUM

RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN AMERICA
Andrew M. Greeley
Harvard University Press, $25, 137 pp.

John A. Coleman

I once had the good fortune to live in a small learned community of Dutch Jesuits where the rule of thumb for conversation was that we would never spend more than two minutes arguing a fact. Contention over interpretation could last a long time but when an issue of fact came into dispute we turned immediately to an ample shelf of dictionaries, encyclopedias, and atlases to settle the difference. Andrew Greeley's new book would have been welcome in that room for it is chock-full of factual data about American religious behavior since the end of World War II.

Greeley has produced a careful compendium of findings from national samples of survey data from Gallup's American Institute of Public Opinion, the National Opinion Research Center's semi-annual General Social Survey, and the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan.

In answering the question, "How well has religion fared in the United States?" he tests five models for understanding religious change: (1) the secularization model which assumes long-term religious decline; (2) a cyclic model which predicts periodic revivals and declines; (3) an episodic event model which explains reli-

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gious change because of a major history-making episode, e.g., the issuance of the encyclical *Humanae vitae*; (4) a stability model which basically predicts no religious change; and (5) a religious growth model. Greeley's data largely confirm models three and four.

Greeley discovers only four areas of some religious decline in American religion since the 1940s: (1) a decline in the literal interpretation of the Bible (almost entirely among Catholics for whom such interpretation does not represent, in any event, orthodoxy); (2) the decline in the proportion of Protestants remaining in the mainline churches (where a kind of denominational musical chairs occurs which has not much impact on measures of individual religiosity as such); (3) a decline in church attendance among Catholics from 1968-1975 which ended in 1975; and (4) a decline in financial contributions among Catholics to their church.

In other areas, such as religious beliefs (Is there a God? Was Jesus Christ divine? Is there life after death? Do you believe in heaven and hell?) and religious practices (frequency of prayer, church attendance), the stability model holds. Remarkably little variance on these items shows up in national surveys since the late 1940s. There are absolutely no data to confirm a secularization model. Greeley comments: "The secularization model which has never been confirmed by the data and has often been disproved—as in this book—nonetheless remains as strong as ever in scholarly and journalistic circles, unshaken and apparently unshakable. Students of religion will not be surprised. They know a religion when they see one. They know that religious faith is difficult if not impossible to disprove." The secularization thesis is an item of religious belief!

Greeley ably shows that a slight rise in those who describe themselves as nonreligious is due to the baby-boom demographic bulge (a function of age) rather than an increase in secularizing tendencies in American society. In a brief statistical exercise he demonstrates that "age correlations without cohort analysis prove nothing."

Catholic declines in church attendance since the late 1960s bottomed out around 1975 in America (but not in West Germany or Holland which also saw such declines from previous high levels) because of a latent "loyalty" to tradition, which Catholics justified "by an appeal to a God who 'understood' instead of to church leaders who did not."

For those who want their "facts" about American religion straight, Greeley's survey results belong on a shelf with two other empirical (but more interpretative) studies of American religion: Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney's *American Mainline Religion* (Rutgers University Press, 1987) and Robert Wuthnow's *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton University Press, 1988). Roof and McKinney's study has the merit of dividing the Protestant sample consistently into distinctive families, e.g., the black churches, the liberal churches, the moderate center, and conservative churches, which frequently prove more illuminating when comparing Catholic with Protestant samples than lumping all Protestants together as Greeley tends to do.

My only *caveat* about this excellent study is a tone in the last chapter of the book which seems to suggest that if you cannot find an operational measure of religious change which can be translated into survey research data, any claims about religion remain mere armchair speculation.

Ever a bit feisty, Greeley here goes further than the modest and useful limit he set himself in the first chapter where he claimed, "I am limiting myself, by assignment and training, to the part of the story which can be gleaned from survey data." Surely, however, other research strategies (e.g., content analysis, interviews, comparative organizational analysis) yield empirical evidence. By using such other strategies, Robert Wuthnow, for example, points to important areas of organizational change in American religion (e.g., the growth of the governmental role in religious welfare programs and the proliferation in the last decades of single-issue, nondenominational, religious lobbies and special purpose groups) which would seem to fit Greeley's religious change model, a model which in Greeley's study remains more of a cipher than is necessary. Religion, after all, can change without declining. □

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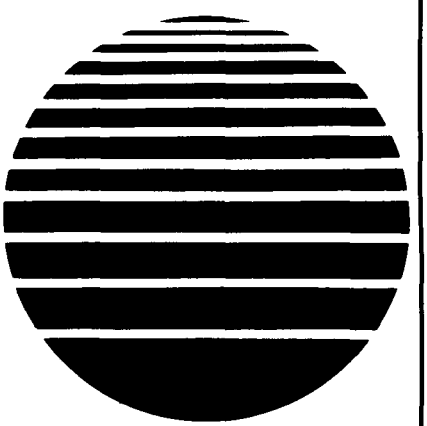

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DELIVERING THE GOODS

JESUS THE LIBERATOR OF DESIRE
Sebastian Moore
Crossroad, $11.95, 132 pp.

Sidney Callahan

Sebastian Moore, an English theologian teaching at Boston College, produces theological and spiritual reflection as though writing an epic saga. There is a story line and a series of reasoned arguments, but his chapters are also filled with aphorisms, parables, elliptical references, apt quotes, and lyrical outbursts of original verse composed to underscore important points in his narrative.

Readers may either be enthralled by this exuberant original approach or find it too exotic and somewhat baffling. I am an enthusiast who finds Moore's work to be intellectually stimulating, solid, wise, and, best of all, spiritually energizing. How refreshing not to be bored, or tempted to think of theology as narrow and dull!

Here at last is a theologian who realizes the primary importance of psychological self-awareness and dynamic human consciousness. Other religious writers palaver about psychology, the self, interpersonal relationships, spiritual growth, and transcendence, but Moore delivers the goods. He seems to understand the minds and hearts of mystics, scholars, and ordinary people.

In this work Moore takes up the theme of human desire and the "generic wonder questions": Why is there anything at all? What do we want and why do we want it? For Moore, desire is "the allure of God," the heart of the mystery instigated by the Holy Spirit who solicits us to become more ourselves as we become more one with God. Jesus awakens our deepest desires and liberates them fully; through Jesus our finite humanity is taken up into the infinite life of God.

Moore's major insight here is that the transforming, intimate personal experience of the disciples with Jesus before and after the Resurrection is the core of God's self-disclosure in history. Jesus did for his first disciples what he does for us: he brings our deepest desires out of hiding and makes it possible to overcome the inertia and sin which stunt and deform our lives. The disciples were first awakened, but then had their hopes annihilated by the crucifixion. After this dying, their subsequent experience of the risen Christ transformed them. They were catapulted by their personal experience into a new liberated existence. When the finite is taken up into the infinite life of God, even bodily death loses its power.

But Moore's idea of transcendence and human transformation is not the cheap grace offered by New Age spiritualities. Along with our joy and the awakening of our deepest dreams, suffering too is inevitable. Suffering comes from sin but also from the painful process of breaking open and becoming changed. We know this because Jesus the sinless one also suffered and shrank from his passion and cross. We too will have to suffer if we would be transformed through him.

Our sins bring suffering also—in their deformation of self. Sin "deadens the nerve of creaturehood." It is the avoidance of our freedom. We must die to sin after the painful awakenings to the suffering we have caused others. The doctrine of original sin is interpreted by Moore as an accurate psychological description of the human predisposition to find one's deepest desires threatening, and to prefer self-security and inertia. People emerge into adulthood with needy egos or damaged selves, because their parents were incapable of providing adequate nurture and confirmation—since they themselves didn't get enough. Generation after generation, persons who are inadequately selved mistakenly seek what they need in material things, or in power over others.

True desire is threatening because to begin to want something new, to become more and more ourselves, we will have to change. We fear becoming like Jesus because when we live like him in true person-to-person solidarity with others, a cross may await us as well. Liberated lives which are dying to falseness can draw forth violence from other people.

But Jesus and the Holy Spirit draw us onward into the desire to know, the desire to be more, the desire to want to want more. Moore relates the human desire to know to the desire to love and be loved. The philosophical quest for wisdom and the scientific search for truth are fully appreciated in his work as a form of the liberation of the mind.

Sebastian Moore achieves his own remarkable synthesis of orthodox theology and the best of modern thought. He is a Christian humanist who gets everything into a right balance, even producing a fine chapter on sex and desire—an acid test for a modern Catholic theologian.

As for criticism, I can only suggest that Moore might bone up on the new findings of cognitive psychology, which could further strengthen his basic arguments on consciousness and the mind. And yes, perhaps he could use an editor to help him write in a more accessible manner. Most American readers will need more help than he supplies with his offhand references to Eliot, Einstein, Eckhart, Blake, Keats, Habermas, Iris Murdoch, and the plethora of theologians, scripture schol-

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ars, and psychologists he mentions.

Yet the richness emerging from so many resources—so fully integrated—is essential to the genius and charm of Moore's work. He shines a new light on the rich tapestry of received orthodoxy, and indeed, a more "wildly beautiful" pattern appears. □

GIVE ME SHELTER

DOWN AND OUT IN AMERICA
Peter H. Rossi
University of Chicago Press, $15.95 242 pp.

Robert M. Hayes

Twenty-five years after President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act launching the War on Poverty, the United States staggers under the weight of mass homelessness.

Still, over the past year a consensus has emerged in American public opinion that homelessness must be ended, and that government has a key role to play in that effort. Whether help for the homeless poor remains limited to soup kitchens and other Band-Aids, or whether it becomes the starting point for a reasoned assault against systemic poverty, will be one of the great public policy debates of the 1990s. Peter H. Rossi's new book hints at this question, but ultimately offers little to educate either the hearts or the minds of people yearning for solutions to the visible human suffering we call homelessness.

Professor Rossi's troubles begin with his title, an expropriation of George Orwell's brilliant diaries of life in the nether worlds of Paris and London in the 1930s. Orwell, one of the century's keenest social critics, captured the voices of human deprivation, with an emphasis on *human*, in his work. Rossi's *Down and Out* never comes close.

Inexplicably, Professor Rossi begins his book with ten, two-hundred-word vignettes of homeless people—vignettes he later admits are composites. It's as if the people he describes are marketing props to make an essentially academic tome readable to a wider audience. But it's a clumsy technique that stands in sharp contrast to two powerful—and eminently readable—books of the last year by Jonathan Kozol (*Rachel's Children*, Crown, 1988) and Kathleen Hirsch (*Songs From the Alley*, Ticknor & Fields, 1989) which capture the humanity of homeless people in the process of an intelligent analysis of the cause of, and remedies for, mass homelessness.

The dim light that does emanate from Professor Rossi's *Down and Out* is in his description of the forces creating homelessness. He makes the point, a point which is absolutely right but not widely recognized, that homelessness is nothing more than an aggravated state of extreme poverty. Homelessness, he says, is a condition of a lack of shelter to be sure. But extremely poor, precariously housed Americans are, at any point, indistinguishable from the homeless, he notes. Rossi is at his best in making the connections among poverty, welfare policy, housing policy, and homelessness. To attack homelessness we need to attend to the upstream currents that pull people in.

Rossi seems to understand this well, which is why his obsessive consideration of a national census of the homeless is so curious. It is this marginally useful book's Waterloo.

It is perfectly obvious that no accurate census of constantly moving people, who place a life-preserving premium on disguise, can be made. Any rational homeless person worth his or her salt will not look homeless: how else can one spend hours in the warmth of a restaurant for the price of a cup of coffee? Besides, while

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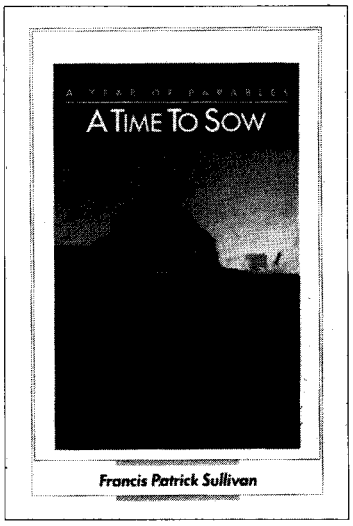

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San Francisco

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Rossi argues that any solution to homelessness must address root causes, he seems not to notice that we already have accurate gauges of the number of people living in extreme poverty and the number of housing units needed to meet the nation's demand.

Nonetheless, to further some academic curiosity, Rossi consumes over one-fifth of his book arguing that $10 million be spent to count the homeless. He castigates (and repeatedly misnames) one of the nation's leading advocacy organizations, Washington, D.C.'s Community for Creative Non-Violence, for its estimates. But this mindless focus bogs the book into a swamp of petty relevance and near-unreadability.

Rossi is plain wrong in saying that no one has articulated "a coherent set of programs" or "pressed for specific legislation on social action." For five years now Congress has been debating portions of the Homeless Persons Survival Act, omnibus legislation that sets forth a series of steps to end homelessness in America. In fact, significant pieces of the omnibus bill are already law, and additional housing legislation is brewing.

The people of America are tired of homelessness. They want solutions and they are pressing government to end this national scandal.

Down and Out concludes that because public policy decisions in America "created" the problem of homelessness, they can "solve the problem as well." On that note, at least, Professor Rossi should be heard. □

RELIGIOUS BOOKNOTES

Practicing ethics & spirituality

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Richard McCormick is the premier Catholic moral theologian writing in English today. His many years as the chronicler of current writings in moral theology, under the rubric of "Notes on Moral Theology" for *Theological Studies*, provided him with a magisterial grasp of the field; his active involvement with various professional associations dealing with health care issues and his indefatigable labors as a consultant to various religious bodies have given him the opportunity to apply his ethical insights to real life situations.

This volume of essays sums up his thinking on the foundational problems of Catholic ethical theory and his application of ethical principles to exigent situations confronting the pastoral worker and the professional. One will find reflections here on the ethical dimensions of everything from heart transplants and the AIDS epidemic to reproductive technologies, the care of the terminally ill, and the pastoral dimensions of divorce and remarriage. Early on, the theoretical issues of ethical thinking, both as a discipline and as a discipline in the church, get a lengthy treatment.

I am not a moral theologian and, as a consequence, am unfit to render judgment on many of McCormick's judgments. But as an interested amateur I can recommend this book to my colleagues (rest assured that the professional will read this work with care) for three reasons. First, McCormick is a model of clarity. He writes well; he knows how to lay out a problem lucidly; he defines; and he judges. Secondly, he is a *theologian*, which means that he has a profound respect for the sources and is unabashedly a churchman who knows how to speak from within a tradition. Finally, he is intellectually adventuresome without being iconoclastic. His *obsequiums* toward the noninfallible pronouncements of the Vatican are not obsequious (there is a real distinction in that word play!). Consequently, his writings, including the present book, are central to discussions in moral theology today.

The Critical Calling: Reflections on Moral Dilemmas Since Vatican II, *by Richard A. McCormick, Georgetown, $29.95, $16.95 paper, 414 pp.*

Because the late patristic church viewed him as a heretic, Origen, the great Alexandrian theologian and son of a martyr, has always had a pall over his reputation. Nonetheless, he is one of the most important and, arguably, the most indefatigable of Christian theologians and Bible commentators. In a letter Saint Jerome listed the books of Origen he had seen at Caesarea in his own day. He mentions two hundred books (each scroll is a book) on the Old Testament alone, with twice that many when one adds the New Testament Commentaries and the homilies. Jerome does not note the *Hexapla* which set out the entire Old Testament in six different Greek versions in parallel columns. There was probably only one copy of it of which, now, we only know fragments. In fact, many of Origen's works have come down to us in a mutilated state or in translations, but even the parts that have survived add up to an impressive whole.

Crouzel has written widely on Origen so this full biography has the authoritative ring of one who knows Origen and his writings intimately. The author is at pains to distance Origen himself from the origenists, who deformed his thoughts, and to show that many of the later doctrines of Christianity find their first formulation in Origen. While not as readable as Joseph Trigg's *Origen* (John Knox, 1983), this is a work that must be read by historical theologians and those interested in the

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame. His books include* The Catholic Experience *and* The Catholic Faith: An Introduction, *both from Paulist Press.*

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history of biblical interpretation. The work should have a particular appeal to anyone concerned with Christian spirituality since, as Crouzel says, Origen can lay claim to having invented the field. His own asceticism (he had himself castrated as a young man but lamented the foolish act later as an excess of zeal) notwithstanding, Origen had a deeply affective piety which anticipated by centuries the warmth of a Bernard of Clairvaux and a Francis of Assisi. His concept of the spiritual life as ascent; his use of the *Song of Songs* as a mystical text; his theory of *christomimesis*—all these would resonate through the mystical tradition of the church. Crouzel is at his best in threading through the not always understandable thought of Origen, while giving balanced judgments about controversies connected with his name. Crouzel lacks the easy stylistic grace of a Peter Brown but, despite a certain convoluted manner (the translator may have been of some help here), this is an important work by a distinguished scholar.

Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian, *by Henri Crouzel, Harper & Row, $39.95, 278 pp.*

Julian of Norwich is widely read today thanks, mainly, to the efforts of those scholars who have attempted to give women a fair hearing in theological circles. Among the fourteenth-century English mystics she is a premier figure because of the vigor of her writing and the originality of her theological expressions. We are fortunate to possess a fine contemporary translation of her revelations, with an exhaustive introduction by Colledge and Walsh in the Paulist series of spiritual classics: *Julian of Norwich: Showings* (1978). Pelphrey's book, a volume in the series, *The Way of the Christian Mystics*, from Glazier, could serve both as a vademecum to the writings of Julian herself and as an adjunct to the Colledge/Walsh volume.

Julian of Norwich, *by Brant Pelphrey, Michael Glazier, $14.95, 272 pp.*

Pelphrey's analysis of the revelations (the "showings" as Julian called them) is helpful with his particular strength being an analysis of some of the more striking of Julian's formulations: the kindness of God; the maternal image of Christ; the laughter of Christ; and so on. Untutored readers, however, need to be cautioned about some of his eccentric judgments: his overestimation of the influence of Julian on Eliot's *Four Quartets*; his peculiar notion that Julian actually died when she received her revelations (and then was resuscitated?); a garbled note in which he seems to confuse the veil of Veronica with the Shroud of Turin; etc. More positively, Pelphrey provides fuller information about life and culture in fourteenth-century Norwich than does Colledge/Walsh, which does much to illuminate Julian's life and her writings. On the whole, then, this is a useful if mildly flawed work about one of the most original and appealing of the medieval mystics.

The Imitation of Christ can lay fair claim to the status of a spiritual classic. Creasy claims he knows of versions in nearly sixty languages and a checklist done at the beginning of the century cited 6,000 editions in English. Every Catholic of a certain age got a copy as a gift sometime or another (I still possess the one I received at my high school graduation), even though today its luster has somewhat diminished due to changing tastes in spirituality. Creasy's intention, then, is to retrieve this great work by a "new reading." That he does not use the term "translation" is significant because, true to the pieties of reader response criticism, Creasy wants to translate not words (what he calls "stencil" translation) but the deep meaning of words as they were understood by a late medieval reader into the language of contemporary culture. He explains this procedure at some length in his introduction (while providing, in passing, a fascinating account of changing prose styles in English) with some specific examples of how he proceeded. Purists may object that what he has done is to construct an apologia for paraphrase, but the Italian proverb *traddutore traditore* (every translator is a traitor) still holds.

The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis: A New Reading, *by William C. Creasy, Mercer, $35, 169 pp.*

My sense is that Creasy's translation is quite readable even though I personally lament the loss of those Latinate nouns (e.g., compunction, contempt, etc.) which were part of the peculiar vocabulary of the old spiritual writers. If a manual edition of this version were to appear, the editor should think about integrating the scriptural citations into the text or in footnotes instead of listing them at the close of the volume with no specific reference to page or line. A final point. *The Imitation of Christ* derives from the school of the so-called modern devotion which flourished in the Low countries in the late Middle Ages. John Van Engen's recent *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings* (Paulist, 1988) gives a brilliant account of this movement as well as a judicious selection of diverse writings associated with it. Creasy does not allude to it (it appeared, probably, when he was in press) but it makes an obvious companion volume while being worthy of study in its own right.

Every's book is a revision of a 1970 English edition originally published, under the title *Christian Mythology*, as part of a series on world mythologies. The current title is somewhat misleading since legends are not myths even though one might be found in the other and vice versa. Every's book deals with the *mythos* in the Bible and with legends accruing to both historical persons (Mary or the saints) and events (the finding of the true cross). The text is engaging enough, but the real value of the book comes from the profuse illustrations taken from the history of Christian art and illumination. Some of the illustrations are old standards. One would expect Piero della Francesca's fresco cycle on the legend(s) of the true cross in the chapter on the same topic (even though

Christian Legends, *by George Every, Peter Bedrick, $18.95, 144 pp.*

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the frescos are erroneously dated by Every) for instance. Other illustrations are not as common and not without interest. I was particularly taken with an illustrated Book of Hours depicting the expelled Adam and Eve being harassed by what appears to be a large goose and—on the same theme—the bronze door of the cathedral of Hildesheim showing Adam trying to learn how to use a hoe. This book, in short, rests more comfortably on the coffee table than on the bookshelf. It is a good browse and would make a nice gift. Look for it on the remainder tables this year.

The rather lubricious title of Williams's book is offputting enough, but the subtitle

Everything You Always Wanted to Know about the Catholic Church but Were Afraid to Ask, *by Paul L. Williams, Doubleday, $17.95, 310 pp.*

that follows an asterisk (*For Fear of Excommunication) is insulting rather than cute. It gives credence to anti-Catholic canards. This would all be forgivable if the book were good but, alas, the answers to the four hundred questions that are on the minds of the presumptive interrogators are not always reliable. To cite some random examples: Catholics put the pronouncements of the church before the Scriptures (p. 36); that Mary's vision to Saint Dominic is the official church explanation for the origin of the rosary (p.70); that the Shroud of Turin was declared the "most important" relic in the church by Pope Paul VI (p. 102); that the regional liturgies (some of which are in existence to this day) of the early medieval church are called "liturgical aberrations" (p. 172); etc. Most of what is in this book is potted history derived from secondary sources or Vatican gossip, ancient (Williams declares Alexander VI the worst pope) or recent (the Vatican's sorry financial dealings).

It was with profound relief that I turned from Williams to a *Festschrift* edited by O'Donovan and Sanks for their Jesuit confrere, Avery Dulles, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. Rather than put together a clutch of unconnected essays, the editors asked the contributors (and a distinguished lot they are) to concentrate on those foundational issues which undergird serious theology today and to which Dulles turned his attention in his distinguished career as a theologian and teacher. All the essayists were conscious of our post-modern, historically conscious, culture as they wrestled with issues such

Faithful Witness: Foundations of Theology for Today's Church, *edited by Leo O'Donovan and T. Howland Sanks, Crossroad, $19.50, 252 pp.*

as how revelation might be conceptualized or how one understands the Scriptures as a norm for church life or the vexatious question of the relationship of Christianity to other world religions and to the world of unbelief. Alas, my limited space does not even allow me to outline the richness of the offerings here, just as fairness constrains me from singling out one author over another. Suffice it to say that within this volume there is as good a survey of the issues and promises in foundational theology as one will find in a single volume. Mindful of its readership, each writer also provides a brief annotated bibliography at the close of the individual studies for further reading. I suspect that this volume will find some classroom use. It does honor to Dulles whose influence permeates these pages. □

IN BRIEF

WHERE THE SPIRIT BREATHES: PROPHETIC DISSENT IN THE CHURCH, *by José I. González Faus. Orbis Books, $10.95, 140 pp.*

Who would question the love for the church of those saints who stringently protested the abuses that ultimately led to the Reformation? Yet there are too few who credit with a genuine love of the church modern Catholic critics of popes and bishops. This persuasive and well-annotated anthology calls pre-Tridentine dissent "personal," because of its emphasis on corruption in the clergy, and post-Tridentine dissent "structural," since it has focused largely on questions of authority. An exception to this contrast is a quotation from Giovanni Papini (1881-1956) to the effect that the official church is no longer composed of missionaries but of functionaries.

One of the book's most positive and useful sections provides guidelines for loving, well-based, and effective dissent, together with guidance for church leaders on the reception of such criticisms, much of this thanks to German theologians. The final pages, on the "preference for the poor," contrast the atrocious spectacle of human malnutrition and misery, in a world of potential sufficiency for all, with the demands of the Gospel. The author challenges the church to be in the vanguard of the restructuring forces needed to bring solidarity and justice to the world. It is a challenge to us all—as is the duty of dissent. E.S.S.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 546)

the disagreement are pent up feelings between the groups. We must leave the past behind us and move on to a new beginning. I am sure that an answer can be found that will solve the problem.

MELVIN N. COHEN

Why women abort

Minot, N. Dak.

To the Editors: A few comments on your August 11 abortion editorial and the remarks following it.

I would hope that eventually we can stop spending precious human energy in the courts and legislatures and instead spend it on compassion, understanding, and dialogue. Christ's words don't exhort us to legal action but to love, caring, support, forgiveness, tolerance. Laws or restrictions don't change hearts or minds or even, in many cases, behavior.

I like Mary C. Segers's reminder of the 1974 Vatican declaration "that we must work to eliminate the root cause of abortion" and Sidney Callahan's call for "support for childbirth, childbearing, and family needs."

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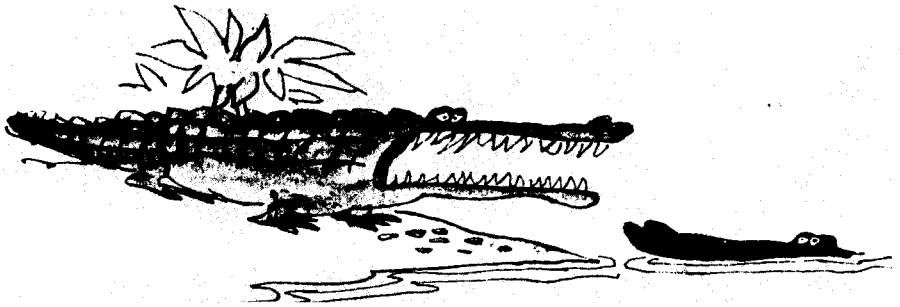

"Bad news! The bird that picks our teeth is extinct."

Until women with unwanted pregnancies are relatively free from fear, desperation, shame, guilt—until these women are accepted as they are—abortion will be sought out by many, one way or another. And as Annie Lally Milhaven warns us, if abortion is simply outlawed, some women will kill themselves trying to abort.

JIM LEIN

Translating Thomas

Heidelberg, W. Germany

To the Editors: St. Thomas Aquinas, certainly, is not an expert concerning the biology of today. But perhaps remarks in his *Summa theologiae* are worth considering and can show a way out of the antinomy on abortion [August 11 issue]. He declares: *"...anima praeexistit in ebryone, a principio quidem nutritiva, postmodum autem sensitiva, et tandem intellectiva"* (S.Th. I/118/2); just so seven times. That means: The embryo has firstly the life of a plant, then of an animal, finally of a person.

Therefore, from the beginning is the embryo a person? Not at all.

REV. ALFONS BEIL

Ethic of convenience

Winfield, Kans.

To the Editors: Mary C. Segers asks the reader to remember the consistent life ethic in her comments on "Abortion: What Does *'Webster'* Mean?" [August 11]. She and other feminists conveniently forget that once a woman becomes pregnant, the issue of abortion directly involves not only the mother, but her unborn baby. So, in response to her question, "...Remember the consistent life ethic (of the Catholic church)?" I respond: That is what the church's prolife stand is about. It is working to improve the lives of needy women and—consistent with its stand—the lives of the unborn.

The issue of abortion isn't complex to those who have a consistent life ethic. Once an ovum is fertilized, you have life, separate, but attached to the mother. That new life inside or outside of its mother has as much right to be protected as its mother does. The issue of "ensoulment" of an unborn baby is beyond our capability to comprehend. We cannot say that at a certain stage of development the life becomes "human," so we must assume that it is human from the moment of conception. Any other issue in connection with the pregnancy does not detract from the humanity of the unborn baby.

CHRISTOPHER M. RIGGS

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